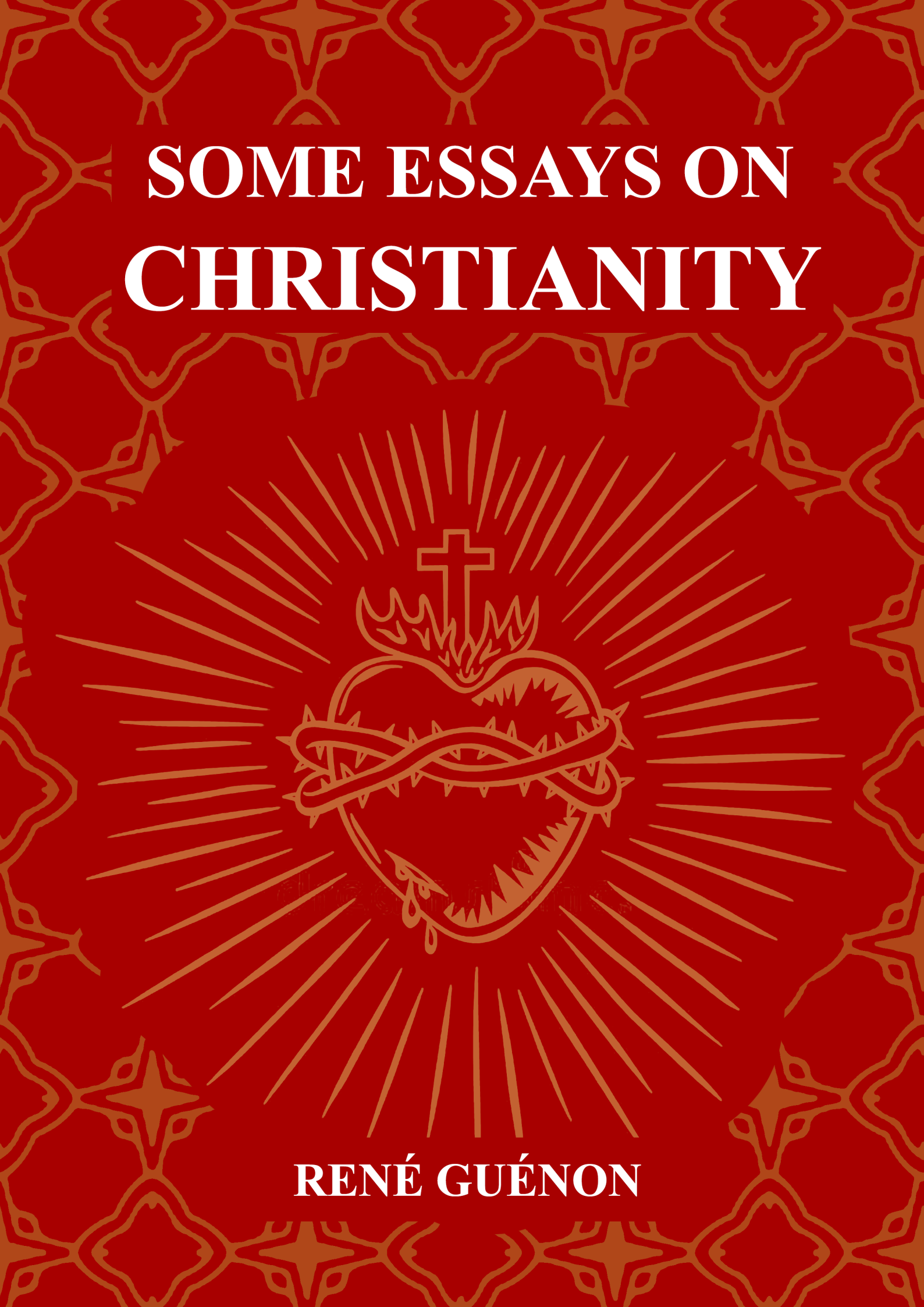
SOME ESSAYS ON CHRISTIANITY



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STUDIES IN CHRISTIANITY

Posthumous Collection

Auto-translated by A.I

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ON SACRED LANGUAGES

We remarked incidentally, some time ago[1], that the Western world has at its disposal no sacred language other than Hebrew; there is here, in truth, a rather strange fact that calls for some observations; even if one does not claim to resolve the various questions that arise on this subject, the matter is not without interest. It is evident that, if Hebrew can play this role in the West, it is by reason of the direct filiation that exists between the Judaic and Christian traditions and of the incorporation of the Hebrew Scriptures into the Sacred Books of Christianity itself; but one may wonder how it comes about that the latter does not have a sacred language that properly belongs to it, whereby its case, among the different traditions, appears as truly exceptional.

In this regard, it is above all important not to confuse sacred languages with merely liturgical languages[2]: for a language to be able to fulfill this latter role, it suffices, in sum, that it be "fixed," exempt from the continual variations that languages that are commonly spoken inevitably undergo[3]; but sacred languages are exclusively those in which the scriptures of the different traditions are formulated. It goes without saying that every sacred language is also at the same time, and a fortiori, the liturgical or ritual language of the tradition to which it belongs[4], but the converse is not true; thus, Greek and Latin can perfectly well, like certain other ancient languages[5], play the role of liturgical languages for Christianity[6], but they are in no way sacred languages; even if one were

1 "The 'roots of plants'," in the September 1946 issue of Études Traditionnelles.

2 This is all the more important since we have seen an orientalist describe Arabic as a "liturgical language," which it in fact is a sacred language, with the concealed intention—yet sufficiently clear to anyone who knows how to understand—of depreciating the Islamic tradition; and this is not unrelated to the fact that this same orientalist carried out in Arabic-speaking countries, moreover without success, a veritable campaign for the adoption of writing in Latin characters.

3 We prefer to say here "fixed language" rather than "dead language," as one is accustomed to do, for so long as a language is employed for ritual uses, one cannot say, from the traditional point of view, that it is really dead.

4 We say liturgical or ritual because the first of these two words properly applies only to religious forms, whereas the second has a quite general meaning and is equally appropriate to all traditions.

5 Notably Syriac, Coptic, and Old Slavonic, in use in various Eastern Churches.

6 It is understood that we have in view only the regular and orthodox branches of Christianity; Protestantism in all its forms, making use only of vernacular languages, no longer thereby has a liturgy properly so called.

to suppose that they may once have had such a character[7], this would in any case have been in traditions that have disappeared and with which Christianity obviously has no relationship of filiation.

The absence of a sacred language in Christianity becomes even more striking when one observes that, even as regards the Hebrew Scriptures, the original text of which nevertheless exists, it "officially" makes use only of Greek and Latin translations[8]. As for the New Testament, it is known that the text is known only in Greek, and that it is on this text that all the versions in other languages have been made, even in Hebrew and Syriac; now, at least as far as the Gospels are concerned, it is assuredly impossible to admit that this is their true language, we mean that in which the very words of Christ were uttered. It may be, however, that they were never actually written except in Greek, having previously been transmitted orally in their original language[9]; but one may then ask why the fixation by writing, when it took place, did not take place just as well in that very language, and this is a question to which it would be very difficult to give an answer. Be that as it may, all this is not without presenting certain drawbacks in various respects, for a sacred language alone can ensure the rigorous invariability of the text of the Scriptures; translations necessarily vary from one language to another, and, moreover, they can never be more than approximate, each language having its own modes of expression that do not correspond exactly to those of others[10]; even when they render as well as possible the outward and literal meaning, they in any case bring many obstacles to the penetration of the other, more profound meanings[11]; and one can thereby

7 The fact that we do not know of any Sacred Books written in these languages does not permit one to rule out this supposition absolutely, for there were certainly in antiquity many things that have not come down to us; there are questions that would assuredly be very difficult to resolve at present, such as, for example, with regard to the Roman tradition, that of the true character of the Sibylline Books, as well as of the language in which they were written.

8 The Septuagint version and the Vulgate.

9 This simple remark concerning oral transmission ought to suffice to reduce to nothing all the discussions of the "critics" on the alleged date of the Gospels, and it would indeed suffice if the defenders of Christianity themselves were not more or less affected by the antitraditional spirit of the modern world.

10 This state of affairs is not without favoring the attacks of modernist "exegetes"; even if texts in a sacred language existed, that would doubtless not prevent them from discussing as profanes that they are, but at least it would then be easier, for all those who still retain something of the traditional spirit, not to believe themselves obliged to take account of their pretensions.

11 This is particularly visible for sacred languages in which the characters have a numerical or properly hieroglyphic value, which often has great importance from this point of view, and of which any translation

gain an understanding of some of the quite special difficulties presented by the study of the Christian tradition for anyone who does not wish to confine himself to mere appearances that are more or less superficial.

Naturally, all this by no means implies that there are no reasons why Christianity should have this exceptional character of being a tradition without a sacred language; on the contrary, there must very certainly be some, but it must be acknowledged that they do not appear clearly at first sight, and no doubt, in order to succeed in bringing them to light, a considerable effort would be required that we cannot contemplate undertaking; moreover, almost everything that touches upon the origins of Christianity and its early period is unfortunately shrouded in many obscurities. One might also ask whether there is not some relation between this character and another that is scarcely less singular: namely, that Christianity does not possess either the equivalent of the properly "legal" part of the other traditions; this is so true that, to make up for it, it had to adapt to its use the ancient Roman law, making to it, moreover, additions which, though proper to it, likewise do not have their source in the Scriptures themselves[12]. By bringing these two facts together on the one hand, and by recalling on the other hand that, as we have remarked on other occasions, certain Christian rites appear in some sense as an "externalization" of initiatic rites, one might even ask whether original Christianity was not in reality something very different from all that one can think of it today; if not as regards the doctrine itself[13], at least as regards the ends for which it was constituted[14]. For our part, we have wished here only to pose these questions simply, to which we certainly do not claim to give an answer; but, given the interest they manifestly

obviously leaves nothing remaining.

12 One could say, using a term borrowed from the Islamic tradition, that Christianity does not have a shariyah; this is all the more remarkable since, in the traditional filiation that one may call "Abrahamic," it is situated between Judaism and Islam, which on the contrary both have a very developed shariyah.

13 Or perhaps one ought rather to say, as regards the part of the doctrine that has remained generally known down to our own day; that part has certainly not changed, but it may be that in addition there were other teachings, and certain allusions of the Fathers of the Church scarcely seem capable of being understood otherwise; the efforts made by moderns to diminish the scope of these allusions prove, in sum, only the limitations of their own mentality.

14 The study of these questions would also lead to raising that of the relations of primitive Christianity with Essenism, which is moreover rather poorly known, but of which it is known at least that it constituted an esoteric organization connected to Judaism; many fanciful things have been said about this, but this too is a point that would deserve to be examined seriously.

present in more than one respect, it would be greatly to be wished that someone who would have at his disposal the time and the means to carry out the necessary researches in this regard might, one day or another, bring some clarifications to bear on them.

THE WORD AND THE SYMBOL

In one of his most recent articles (Regnabit, November 1925), the Reverend Father Anizan rightly and very opportunely insisted on the importance and the value of the symbolic form for the transmission of doctrinal teachings of a religious and traditional order. We allow ourselves in turn to return to this subject, in order to add a few complementary clarifications and to show even more explicitly the different points of view under which it may be considered.

First of all, symbolism appears to us as being especially adapted to the requirements of human nature, which is not a purely intellectual nature, but which needs a sensible basis in order to rise toward the higher spheres. One must take the human composite as it is, one and multiple at the same time in its real complexity; this is what one has too often tended to forget ever since Descartes claimed to establish between soul and body a radical and absolute separation. For a pure intelligence, assuredly, no exterior form, no expression is required either to understand the truth or even to communicate to other pure intelligences what it has understood insofar as this is communicable; but it is not so for man. Fundamentally, every expression, every formulation, whatever it may be, is a symbol of the thought that it translates outwardly; in this sense, language itself is nothing other than a symbolism. There must therefore be no opposition between the use of words and that of figurative symbols; these two modes of expression are rather complementary to one another (and moreover, in fact, they can be combined, since writing is originally ideographic and sometimes even, as in China, it has always preserved this character). In a general way, the form of language is analytic, “discursive,” like human reason of which it is the proper instrument and whose movement it follows or reproduces as exactly as possible; on the contrary, symbolism properly so called is essentially synthetic, and thereby “intuitive” in a certain sense, which renders it more apt than language to serve as a point of support for the “intellectual intuition” which is above reason, and which one must be careful not to confuse with that inferior intuition to which various

contemporary philosophers appeal. Consequently, if one does not content oneself with noting a difference and if one wishes to speak of superiority, this superiority will be, whatever some may claim, on the side of synthetic symbolism, which opens possibilities of conception that are truly unlimited, whereas language, with more defined and more fixed significations, always sets for the understanding bounds that are more or less narrow.

Let one therefore not say that the symbolic form is good only for the vulgar; it is rather the contrary that would be true; or better still, it is equally good for all, because it helps each person to understand more or less completely, more or less profoundly, the truth that it represents according to the measure of his own intellectual possibilities. Thus it is that the highest truths, which would in no way be communicable or transmissible by any other means, become so up to a certain point when they are, so to speak, incorporated into symbols which will no doubt conceal them for many, but which will manifest them in all their brilliance to the eyes of those who know how to see.

Is this to say that the use of symbolism is a necessity? Here, one must make a distinction: in itself and in an absolute way, no exterior form is necessary; all are equally contingent and accidental with respect to what they express or represent. Thus, according to the teaching of the Hindus, any figure whatsoever, for example a statue symbolizing this or that aspect of the Divinity, must be considered only as a “support,” a point of support for meditation; it is therefore a simple “adjuvant,” and nothing more. A Vedic text gives in this regard a comparison that perfectly clarifies this role of symbols and of exterior forms in general: these forms are like the horse that allows a man to accomplish a journey more quickly and with much less effort than if he had to do it by his own means. Doubtless, if this man had no horse at his disposal, he could nonetheless reach his goal, but how much more difficult it would be! If he can make use of a horse, he would be very wrong to refuse it under the pretext that it is more worthy of him to have recourse to no aid; is it not precisely thus that the detractors of symbolism act? And even, if the journey is long and arduous, although there is never an absolute

impossibility of making it on foot, there may nevertheless be a genuine practical impossibility of bringing it to completion. It is thus with rites and symbols: they are not necessary by an absolute necessity, but they are so in a certain sense by a necessity of appropriateness, having regard to the conditions of human nature.

But it does not suffice to consider symbolism from the human side as we have just done up to this point; in order to penetrate its full scope, it is fitting to envisage it equally from the divine side, if it is permitted to express oneself thus. Already, if one observes that symbolism has its foundation in the very nature of beings and things, that it is in perfect conformity with the laws of this nature, and if one reflects that natural laws are in sum only an expression and as it were an exteriorization of the divine Will, does this not authorize one to affirm that this symbolism is of "non-human" origin, as the Hindus say, or, in other terms, that its principle goes back farther and higher than humanity?

It is not without reason that the Reverend Father Anizan, at the beginning of the article to which we were referring a moment ago, recalled the first words of the Gospel of Saint John: "In the beginning was the Word." The Word, the Logos, is at once Thought and Speech: in itself, It is the divine Intellect, which is the "place of possibles"; with respect to us, It manifests and expresses itself through Creation, in which are realized in actual existence certain of these same possibles which, as essences, are contained in It from all eternity. Creation is the work of the Word; it is also, and thereby, its manifestation, its exterior affirmation; and this is why the world is like a divine language for those who know how to understand it: "Cœli enarrant gloriam Dei" (Ps. XIX, 2). The philosopher Berkeley was therefore not wrong when he said that the world is "the language that the infinite Spirit speaks to finite spirits"; but he was wrong to believe that this language is only an ensemble of arbitrary signs, whereas in reality there is nothing arbitrary even in human language, every signification having to have originally its foundation in some natural suitability or harmony between the sign and the thing or the idea signified. It is because Adam had received from God the knowledge of the nature of all living beings that he could give

them their names (Genesis, II, 19–20); and all ancient traditions agree in teaching that the true name of a being is one with its very nature or essence.

If the Word is Thought inwardly and Speech outwardly, and if the world is the effect of the divine Speech uttered at the origin of times, the whole of nature may be taken as a symbol of supernatural reality. Everything that is, under whatever mode it may be, having its principle in the divine intellect, translates or represents this principle in its own manner and according to its order of existence; and thus, from one order to another, all things are linked together and correspond so as to concur in universal and total harmony, which is like a reflection of divine Unity itself. It is to this correspondence, the true foundation of symbolism, that we have already alluded here (December 1925); and this is why the laws of a lower domain can always be taken to symbolize the realities of a higher order, where they have their profound reason, which is at once their principle and their end. Let us point out on this occasion the error of modern "naturalistic" interpretations of ancient traditional doctrines, interpretations which purely and simply invert the hierarchy of relations between the different orders of realities: for example, symbols or myths never had the role of representing the movement of the stars, but the truth is that one often finds in them figures inspired by this movement and intended to express analogically something quite different, because the laws of this movement physically translate the metaphysical principles on which they depend. The inferior can symbolize the superior, but the inverse is impossible; moreover, if the symbol were no closer to the sensible order than what it represents, how could it fulfill the function for which it is destined? In nature, the sensible can symbolize the suprasensible; the whole natural order can, in its turn, be a symbol of the divine order; and on the other hand, if one considers man more particularly, is it not legitimate to say that he also is a symbol, by the very fact that he is "created in the image of God" (Genesis, I, 26–27)? Let us add further that nature acquires its full significance only if it is regarded as furnishing us with a means to rise to the knowledge of divine truths, which is precisely also the essential role that we have

recognized in symbolism[1].

These considerations could be developed almost indefinitely; but we prefer to leave to each person the task of making this development by an effort of personal reflection, for nothing could be more profitable; like the symbols that are their subject, these notes must be only a point of departure for meditation. Words, moreover, can render only very imperfectly what is at issue; yet there is still one aspect of the question, and not the least important, that we shall try to make understood or at least sensed by a brief indication.

The divine Word expresses itself in Creation, we said, and this is comparable, analogically and with all proportions observed, to thought expressing itself in forms (there is no longer any need here to make a distinction between language and symbols properly so called) which veil it and manifest it at one and the same time. Primordial Revelation, the work of the Word like Creation, is likewise, so to speak, incorporated into symbols which have been transmitted from age to age since the origins of humanity; and this process is again analogous, in its own order, to that of Creation itself. On the other hand, may one not see, in this symbolic incorporation of the "non-human" tradition, a kind of anticipated image, of "prefiguration," of the Incarnation of the Word? And does this not also allow one to glimpse, to a certain extent, the mysterious relation existing between Creation and the Incarnation which is its crowning?

We shall conclude with a final remark, because we do not forget that this Review is especially the Review of the Sacred Heart. If symbolism is, in its essence, strictly in conformity with the "divine plan," and if the Sacred Heart is the "center of the divine plan," just as the heart is the center of the being, really and symbolically at once, this symbol of the Heart, by itself or through its equivalents, must occupy, in all doctrines

1 It may perhaps not be useless to observe that this point of view, according to which nature is considered as a symbol of the supernatural, is in no way new, and that on the contrary it was very commonly held in the Middle Ages; it was notably that of the Franciscan school, and in particular of Saint Bonaventure. Let us also note that analogy, in the Thomist sense of this word, which allows one to rise from the knowledge of creatures to that of God, is nothing other than a mode of symbolic expression based on the correspondence of the natural order with the supernatural.

issuing more or less directly from the primordial tradition, the central place, that which was given to it, in the midst of the planetary and zodiacal circles, by the Carthusian who sculpted the marble of Saint-Denis d'Orques (see Regnabit, February 1924); this is precisely what we shall attempt to show in other studies.

P.-S. – Since our article of November 1925, some printers' or booksellers' marks of the seventeenth century have been communicated to us, among which we have found three in which the heart appears associated with the "four of chiffre."

One of these marks is rigorously similar, including the initials, to that which we have represented in our fig. 17 by giving it, after M. Deonna, as a tapestry mark of the sixteenth century; this similarity is doubtless only a coincidence, for it is improbable that the author cited by us should have indicated an erroneous reference in this regard. Be that as it may, this mark is found associated with two others, one of which is certainly that of the printer Carolus Morellus (see our fig. 14), and the other of which differs scarcely from the latter except by the monogram, which is formed there of the initials S. M., and by the absence of any additional bar appended to the 4.

Another mark is of the type of that of our fig. 20; the initials placed in the heart are D. B., and the lower part bears a sun instead of a star; this mark is placed beneath a shield in which there is another sun and which is surmounted by a royal crown. The third is of the same kind, but the initials A. D. which appear there are enclosed in two circles taking the place of the curves that simulate the auricles of the heart: the lower part of this one bears three stars; in addition, the 4 is accompanied both by a horizontal bar and by a vertical bar. This last mark is contained in an oval cartouche placed beneath a royal crown supported by two angels with the motto "Non coronabitur nisi qui legitime certaverit." Perhaps these indications will allow some reader of this Review to identify in a precise manner the marks in question.

Let us also point out, on this occasion, the analogy which manifestly

exists between marks of this kind and that of the Orléans printer Matthieu Vivian (1490), previously reproduced by M. Charbonneau-Lassay in Regnabit (January 1924, p. 124)[2]. The principal difference is that, in the latter, the heart containing the initials is not surmounted by the "four of chiffre," but only by the cross; this similarity leads us to regard as extremely probable, not to say more, the hypothesis according to which, in this case as well, it is indeed the Heart of Christ that one wished to represent.

2 [Cf. L. Charbonneau-Lassay, "L'Iconographie ancienne du Cœur de Jésus. Les Marques commerciales des Premiers 'imprimeurs Français'," Regnabit, 3rd year, no. 8, January 1924, pp. 110–129 (p. 124), reprinted in idem, Études de symbolique chrétienne, op. cit., pp. 166–185 (p. 180). Here is the illustration in question:]

THE CORNERSTONE

The symbolism of the "cornerstone," in the Christian tradition, is based on this text: "The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief stone of the corner," or more exactly "the head of the corner" (caput anguli)[1]. What is strange is that this symbolism is most often misunderstood, as a result of a confusion that is commonly made between this "cornerstone" and the "foundation stone" to which that other, still better-known text refers: "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it[2]." This confusion is strange, we say, for, from the specifically Christian point of view, it amounts in fact to confusing Saint Peter with Christ himself, since it is Christ who is expressly designated as the "cornerstone," as is shown by this passage from Saint Paul, who, moreover, clearly distinguishes it from the "foundations" of the edifice: "You are an edifice built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone (summo angulari lapide), in whom every edifice, constructed and bound together in all its parts, rises into a temple consecrated to the Lord, by whom you have entered into its structure (more literally 'built together,' coedificamini) to be the dwelling of God in the Spirit[3]." If the mistake in question were only modern, there would doubtless be no cause to be unduly surprised by it, but it does indeed seem that it is already encountered in times when it is scarcely possible to attribute it purely and simply to ignorance of symbolism; one is therefore led to ask whether in reality it might not rather have been a matter, originally, of an intentional "substitution," explained by the role of Saint Peter as "substitute" of Christ (in Latin vicarius, corresponding in this sense to the Arabic Khalîfah); if it were so, this way of "veiling" the symbolism of the "cornerstone" would seem to indicate that it was regarded as containing something particularly mysterious, and it will be seen later that such a supposition is far from being unjustified[4]. Be that as it may,

1 Psalm CXVIII, 22; Saint Matthew, XXI, 42; Saint Mark, XII, 10; Saint Luke, XX, 17.

2 Saint Matthew, XVI, 18.

3 Epistle to the Ephesians, II, 20–22.

4 The "substitution" may also have been aided by the phonetic similarity existing between the Hebrew

there is in this identification of the two stones, even from the point of view of simple logic, an impossibility that appears clearly as soon as one examines with a little attention the texts that we have cited: the "foundation stone" is that which is laid in the first place, at the very beginning of the construction of an edifice (and that is why it is also called the "first stone")[5]; how then could it be rejected in the course of that same construction? For it to be so, it is necessary on the contrary that the "cornerstone" be such that then it still cannot find its place; and in fact, as we shall see, it can find it only at the moment of the completion of the whole edifice, and it is thus that it truly becomes the "head of the corner."

In an article that we have already mentioned[6], Ananda Coomaraswamy remarks that the intention of Saint Paul's text is obviously to represent Christ as the unique principle on which the whole edifice of the Church depends, and he adds that "the principle of a thing is neither one of its parts among the others nor the totality of its parts, but that in which all the parts are reduced to a unity without composition." The "foundation stone" (foundation-stone) can indeed, in a certain sense, be called a "corner stone" (corner-stone) as one ordinarily does, since it is placed at an angle or at a "corner" (corner) of the edifice[7]; but it is not unique as such, the edifice necessarily having four corners; and even if one wishes to speak more particularly of the "first stone," it differs in nothing from the base stones of the other corners, except by its situation[8], and it is

name Kephas, which means "stone," and the Greek word Kephalê, "head"; but there is between these two words no other relation, and the foundation of an edifice can obviously not be identified with its "head," that is to say its summit, which would amount to overturning the whole edifice; one might moreover also ask whether this "overturning" does not have some symbolic correspondence with the crucifixion of Saint Peter head downward.

5 This stone must be placed at the north-east corner of the edifice; we shall note in this regard that one must distinguish, in the symbolism of Saint Peter, several aspects or functions to which different "situations" correspond, for on the other hand, as janitor, his place is in the West, where the entrance of every normally oriented church is found; moreover, Saint Peter and Saint Paul are also represented as the two "columns" of the Church, and then they are usually depicted, the one with the keys and the other with the sword, in the attitude of two dwârapâlas.

6 Eckstein, in the journal Speculum, January 1939 issue.

7 We shall be obliged, in this study, to refer often to "technical" English terms, because, belonging originally to the language of old operative masonry, they have for the most part been preserved especially in the rituals of Royal Arch Masonry and of the accessory degrees attached to it, rituals for which no equivalent exists in French; and it will be seen that certain of these terms are rather difficult to translate.

8 According to the operative ritual, this "first stone" is, as we have said, that of the north-east corner; the stones of the other corners are then placed successively following the direction of the apparent movement

distinguished from them neither by its form nor by its function, being in sum only one of four supports equal among themselves; one could say that any one of these four corner-stones "reflects" in some way the dominant principle of the edifice, but it could in no way be regarded as being that principle itself[9]. Moreover, if that were really what is in question, one could not even logically speak of "the cornerstone," since, in fact, there would be four; this one must therefore be something essentially different from the corner-stone understood in the usual sense of "foundation stone," and they have only in common the character of belonging both to one and the same "constructive" symbolism.

We have just alluded to the form of the "cornerstone," and this is indeed a particularly important point: it is because this stone has a special and unique form, which differentiates it from all the others, that not only can it not find its place in the course of the construction, but even the builders cannot understand what its destination is; if they understood it, it is evident that they would not reject it, and that they would content themselves with setting it aside until the end; but they ask themselves "what they will do with the stone," and, being unable to find a satisfactory answer to this question, they decide, believing it unusable, "to heave it over among the rubbish"[10]. The destination of this stone can be understood only by another category of builders, who at this stage do not yet intervene: these are those who have passed "from the square to the compasses," and, by this distinction, one must naturally understand that of the geometric forms which these two instruments serve respectively to trace, that is to say the square form and the circular form, which symbolize in a general way, as is known, the earth and the heaven; here, the square form corresponds to the lower part of the edifice, and the circular form to its upper part, which, in this case, must therefore be constituted by a dome or a vault[11]. In fact, the "cornerstone"

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of the sun, that is to say in this order: south-east, south-west, north-west.

9 This "reflection" is obviously in direct relation with the substitution of which we have spoken.

10 The expression to heave over is rather peculiar, and apparently unusual in this sense in modern English; it would seem able to mean "to lift" or "to raise," but, from the rest of the sentence cited, it is clear that, in reality, it is indeed to the "rejection" of the stone that it applies here.

11 This distinction is, in other terms, that of Square Masonry and Arch Masonry, which, by their respective relations with "earth" and "heaven," or with the parts of the edifice that represent them, are here put into correspondence with the "lesser mysteries" and the "greater mysteries."

is indeed in reality a “keystone” (keystone); A. Coomaraswamy says that, in order to render the true signification of the expression “is become the head of the corner,” one could translate it by is become the keystone of the arch, which is perfectly exact; and thus this stone, by its form as well as by its position, is effectively unique in the whole edifice, as it must be in order to be able to symbolize the principle on which all depends. One may perhaps be surprised that this representation of the principle is thus placed only in the last place in the construction; but one may say that this construction, in its entirety, is ordered with respect to it (which Saint Paul expresses by saying that “in it the whole edifice rises into a temple consecrated to the Lord”), and that it is in it that it finally finds its unity; there is here again an application of the analogy, which we have already explained on other occasions, between the “first” and the “last,” or the “principle” and the “end”: the construction represents manifestation, in which the principle appears only as the ultimate completion; and it is precisely by virtue of this same analogy that the “first stone,” or the “foundation stone,” can be regarded as a “reflection” of the “last stone,” which is the true “cornerstone.”

The equivocation implied in an expression such as corner-stone ultimately rests on the different possible senses of the word “corner”; Coomaraswamy remarks that, in various languages, the words that mean “corner” are often related to others that mean “head” and “extremity”: in Greek, kephalê, “head,” and in architecture “capital” (capitulum, diminutive of caput) can apply only to a summit; but akros (Sanskrit agra) can indicate an extremity in any direction, that is to say, in the case of an edifice, the summit or one of the four “corners” (this latter word is etymologically related to the Greek gônia, “angle”), although often it also applies by preference to the summit. But what is still more important, from the special point of view of the texts concerning the “cornerstone” in the Judeo-Christian tradition, is the consideration of the Hebrew word meaning “corner”: this word is pinnah, and one finds the expressions eben pinnah, “corner stone,” and rosh pinnah, “head of the corner”; but what is particularly remarkable is that, in the figurative sense, this same word pinnah is employed to mean “chief”: an expression designating the “chiefs of the people” (pinnoth ha-am) is

translated literally in the Vulgate by angulos populorum[12]. A "chief" is etymologically a "head" (caput), and pinnah is connected by its root to pnê, which means "face"; the close relation of these ideas of "head" and "face" is evident, and, moreover, the term "face" belongs to a symbolism very widely diffused and which would merit being examined separately[13]. Another connected idea still is that of "point" (which is found in the Sanskrit agra, the Greek akros, the Latin acer and acies); we have already spoken of the symbolism of points with regard to that of weapons and horns[14], and we have seen that it relates to the idea of extremity, but more particularly as regards the upper extremity, that is to say the highest point or the summit; all these comparisons therefore only confirm what we have said of the situation of the "cornerstone" at the summit of the edifice: even if there are other "cornerstones" in the most general sense of this expression[15], it is indeed that one alone which is truly "the cornerstone" par excellence.

We find other interesting indications in the meanings of the Arabic word rukn, "corner" or "angle": this word, because it designates the extremities of a thing, that is to say its most remote and consequently most hidden parts (recondita et abscondita, one might say in Latin), sometimes takes a sense of "secret" or "mystery"; and, in this respect, its plural arkân is to be compared with the Latin arcanum, which likewise has this same sense, and with which it presents a striking resemblance; moreover, at least in the language of the hermeticists, the use of the term "arcane" has certainly been influenced in a direct way by the Arabic word in question[16]. Furthermore, rukn also has the sense of

12 Samuel, XIV, 38; the Greek version of the Septuagint likewise employs the word gônia.

13 Cf. A.-M. Hocart, Les Castes, pp. 151–154, concerning the expression "faces of the earth" employed in the Fiji Islands to designate chiefs. — The Greek word Karai, in the first centuries of Christianity, served to designate the five "faces" or "heads of the Church," that is to say the five principal patriarchates, whose initials combined formed precisely this word: Constantinople, Alexandria, Rome, Antioch, Jerusalem.

14 One may remark that the English word corner is obviously a derivative here of "horn."

15 In this sense, there are not even only four "cornerstones" at the base, but there are also some at any level whatsoever of the construction; and these stones are all of the same ordinary form, rectilinear and rectangular (that is to say cut on the square, the word square moreover having the double sense of "square" and of "square"), contrary to what takes place in the unique case of the keystone.

16 It might be interesting to seek whether there can be a real etymological kinship between the two Arabic and Latin words, even in the ancient use of the latter (for example in the disciplina arcani of the Christians of the early period) or whether it is only a "convergence" that occurred only later, among the hermeticists of the Middle Ages.

"base" or "foundation," which brings us back to the corner-stone understood as the "foundation stone"; in alchemical terminology, el-arkân, when this designation is employed without further precision, are the four elements, that is to say the substantial "bases" of our world, which are thus assimilated to the base stones of the four corners of an edifice, since it is on them that, in a certain sense, the whole corporeal world is built (also represented by the square form)[17]; and, thereby, we arrive again directly at the very symbolism with which we are presently concerned. In fact, there are not only these four arkân or "basic" elements, but there is also a fifth rukn, the fifth element or the "quintessence" (that is to say ether, el-athîr); this one is not on the same "plane" as the others, for it is not simply a base like them, but indeed the very principle of this world[18]; it will therefore be represented by the fifth "corner" of the edifice, which is its summit; and to this "fifth," which is in reality the "first," properly belongs the designation of supreme corner, corner par excellence, or "corner of corners" (rukn el-arkân), since it is in it that the multiplicity of the other corners is reduced to unity[19]. One may further remark that the geometric figure obtained by joining these five corners is that of a pyramid with a quadrangular base: the lateral edges of the pyramid emanate from its summit like so many rays, just as the four ordinary elements, which are represented by the lower extremities of these edges, proceed from the fifth and are produced by it; and it is also along these same edges, which we have intentionally assimilated to rays for this reason (and also by virtue of the "solar" character of the point from which they issue, according to what we have said on the subject of the "eye" of the dome), that the "cornerstone" of the summit "is reflected" in each of the "foundation stones" of the four corners of the base. Finally, there is in what has just been said the very

17 This assimilation of the elements to the four corners of a square is naturally also in relation with the correspondence that exists between these same elements and the cardinal points.

18 It would be in the same plane (at its central point) if this plane were taken as representing an entire state of existence; but that is not the case here, since it is the whole of the edifice that is an image of the world. — Let us remark in this regard that the horizontal projection of the Pyramid of which we speak a little farther on is constituted by the base square with its diagonals, the lateral edges projecting along these and the summit at their point of intersection, that is to say at the very center of the square.

19 In the sense of "mystery" that we have indicated above, rukn el-arkân is equivalent to sirr el-asrâr, which is represented, as we have explained elsewhere, by the upper point of the letter alif: the alif itself figuring the "axis of the world," this, as will be seen still better further on, corresponds very exactly to the position of the keystone.

clear indication of a correlation existing between alchemical symbolism and architectural symbolism, and which is explained moreover by their common "cosmological" character; this is again an important point, to which we shall have to return in connection with other comparisons of the same order.

The "cornerstone," taken in its true sense of the stone "of the summit," is designated at once, in English, as keystone, as capstone (which is also found sometimes written capeston), and as copestone (or coping-stone); the first of these three words is easily understandable, for it is the exact equivalent of the French term clef de voûte (or of arch, the word being able in reality to apply to the stone that forms the summit of an arch as well as of a vault); but the other two call for a little more explanation. In capstone, the word cap is obviously the Latin caput, "head," which brings us back to the designation of this stone as the "head of the corner"; it is properly the stone that "finishes" or "crowns" an edifice; and it is also a capital, which likewise is the "crowning" of a column[20]. We have just spoken of "completion," and the two words cap and "chief" are, in fact, etymologically identical[21]; the capstone is therefore the "chief" of the edifice or of the "work," and by reason of its special form which requires, in order to cut it, particular knowledge or capacities, it is also, at the same time, a "masterpiece" in the companionage sense of this expression[22]; it is by it that the edifice is completely finished, or, in other terms, that it is finally brought to its

20 The term "crowning" is here to be compared with the designation of the "crown" of the head, by reason of the symbolic assimilation, which we have previously pointed out, of the "eye" of the dome with the Brahma-randhra; it is known moreover that the crown, like horns, essentially expresses the idea of elevation. It is also worth noting, in this regard, that the oath of the Royal Arch degree contains an allusion to "the crown of the skull" (The crown of the skull), which suggests a relation between the opening of the latter (as in rites of posthumous trepanation) and the removing (removing) of the keystone; moreover, in a general way, the so-called "penalties" expressed in the oaths of the different Masonic degrees, as well as the signs corresponding to them, in reality relate to the various subtle centers of the human being.

21 In the meaning of the word "to finish," or of the old equivalent expression "to bring to a head," the idea of "head" is associated with that of "end," which indeed corresponds to the situation of the "cornerstone," at once as "stone of the summit," and as "last stone" of the edifice. We shall mention still another term derived from "chief": the chevet of a church is its "head," that is to say the eastern extremity where the apse is found, whose semi-circular form corresponds, in the horizontal plan, to the dome or cupola in vertical elevation, as we have explained on another occasion.

22 The word "work" finds its use both in architecture and in alchemy, and it will be seen that it is not without reason that we make this comparison: in architecture, the completion of the work is the "cornerstone"; in alchemy, it is the "philosopher's stone."

"perfection"[23].

As for the term copestone, the word cope expresses the idea of "to cover"; this is explained by the fact not only that the upper part of the edifice is properly its "covering," but also, and we would even say above all, that this stone is placed so as to cover the opening at the summit, that is to say the "eye" of the dome or of the vault, of which we have already spoken previously[24]. It is therefore in sum, in this respect, the equivalent of a roof-plate, as Mr. Coomaraswamy remarks, who adds that this stone can be regarded as the upper termination or the capital of the "axial pillar" (in Sanskrit skambha, in Greek stauros)[25]; this pillar, as we have already explained, may not be represented materially in the structure of the edifice, but it is nonetheless its essential part, that around which the whole is ordered. The summit character of the "axial pillar," present only in an "ideal" manner, is indicated in a particularly striking way in cases where the "keystone" descends in the form of a "pendant" projecting within the edifice, without being visibly supported by anything in its lower part[26]; the whole construction has its principle in this pillar, and all its diverse parts finally come to be unified in its "ridge," which is the summit of this same pillar, and which is the "keystone" or the "head of the corner"[27].

23 It is to be remarked that, in certain Masonic rites, the degrees that correspond more or less exactly to the upper part of the construction in question here (we say more or less exactly, for there is sometimes in all this a certain confusion) are designated precisely by the name "degrees of perfection." On the other hand, the word "exaltation," which designates accession to the Royal Arch degree, can be understood as alluding to the elevated position of the keystone.

24 One finds, for the placing of this stone, the expression to bring forth the copestone, whose sense is still rather unclear at first sight: to bring forth signifies literally "to produce" (in the etymological sense of the Latin producere) or "to bring to light"; since the stone has already been rejected earlier in the course of the construction, there can be no question, on the day of the completion of the work, of its "production" in the sense of a "making"; but, since it has been buried "among the rubbish," it is a matter of disengaging it, thus of bringing it back to light, in order to place it in view at the summit of the edifice, so that it becomes the "head of the corner"; and thus to bring forth is opposed here to to heave over.

25 Stauros also means "cross," and it is known that, in Christian symbolism, the cross is assimilated to the "axis of the world"; Coomaraswamy relates this word to the Sanskrit sthâvara, "firm" or "stable," which indeed suits a pillar well, and which, moreover, accords exactly with the meaning of "stability" given to the combination of the names of the two columns of the Temple of Solomon.

26 It is this summit of the "axial pillar" which corresponds, as we have said, to the upper point of the alif in Arabic literal symbolism: let us recall also, concerning the terms keystone and "keystone," that the very symbol of the key also has an "axial" signification.

27 Coomaraswamy recalls the symbolic identity of the roof (and more particularly when it is in the form of a vault) with the parasol; we shall also add, in this regard, that the Chinese symbol of the "Great Extreme" (Tai-ki) literally designates a "ridge" or a "summit": it is properly the summit of the "roof of the world."

The real interpretation of the "cornerstone" as "stone of the summit" does indeed seem to have been fairly generally known in the Middle Ages, as is shown in particular by an illustration of the Speculum Humanae Salvationis that we reproduce here[28] (fig. 14); this work was widely disseminated, for there still exist several hundreds of manuscripts of it; one sees in this illustration two masons holding a trowel in one hand and, with the other, supporting the stone that they are preparing to place at the summit of an edifice (apparently the tower of a church whose summit this stone is to complete), which leaves no doubt as to its meaning. It is worth remarking, with regard to this figure, that the stone in question, as a "keystone," or in any other similar function according to the structure of the edifice that it is destined to "crown," can, by its very form, be placed only from above (otherwise, moreover, it is evident that it could fall within the edifice); thereby, it represents in a certain sense the "stone descended from heaven," an expression that applies very well to Christ[29], and that also recalls the stone of the Grail (the lapsit exillis of Wolfram von Eschenbach, which can be interpreted as lapis ex cœlis)[30].

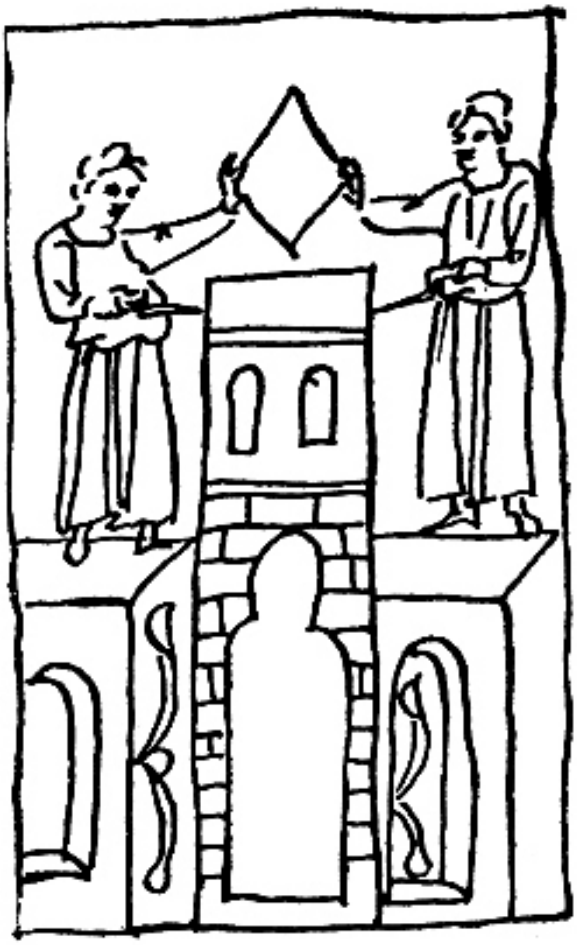

Fig. 14

28 Munich manuscript, clm. 146, fol. 35 (Lutz and Perdrizet, II, pl. 64): the photograph was communicated to us by A. K. Coomaraswamy; it was reproduced in the Art Bulletin, XVII, p. 450 and fig. 20, by Mr. Erwin Panofsky, who considers this illustration as the closest to the prototype, and who, on this subject, speaks of the lapis in caput anguli as a keystone; one could also say, according to our preceding explanations, that this figure represents the bringing forth of the copestone.

29 There would be, in this regard, a comparison to be made between the "stone descended from heaven" and the "bread descended from heaven," for there are important symbolic relations between stone and bread; but this is outside the subject of the present study; in any case, the "descent from heaven" naturally represents the avatarana.

30 Cf. also the symbolic stone of the Estoile Internelle, of which Mr. Charbonneau-Lassay spoke, and which, like the emerald of the Grail, is a faceted stone; this stone, in the cup in which it is placed, corresponds exactly to the "jewel in the lotus" (tnani padmé) of Mahāyāna Buddhism.

Moreover, there is still another important point to note here: Mr. Erwin Panofsky remarked that this same illustration shows the stone under the aspect of an object in the form of a diamond (which brings it still closer to the stone of the Grail, since the latter is also described as cut with facets); this question deserves to be examined more closely, for, although such a representation is far from being the most general case, it relates to sides of the complex symbolism of the "cornerstone" other than those that we have studied up to this point, and which are no less interesting for bringing out its links with the whole of traditional symbolism.

However, before coming to that, there remains for us an accessory question to elucidate: we have just said that the "stone of the summit" may not be a "keystone" in all cases, and, in fact, it is such only in a construction whose upper part is in the form of a dome; in every other case, for example that of a building surmounted by a pointed roof or in the form of a tent, there is nonetheless a "last stone" which, placed at the summit, plays in this respect the same role as the "keystone," and consequently also corresponds to it from the symbolic point of view, but without its being possible to designate it by that name; and the same must be said of the special case of the "pyramidion," to which we have already alluded on another occasion. It must be well understood that, in the symbolism of the builders of the Middle Ages, which rests on the Judeo-Christian tradition and is especially connected, as to its "prototype," to the construction of the Temple of Solomon[31], it is constant, as regards the "cornerstone," that it is properly a "keystone" that is in question; and, if the exact form of the Temple of Solomon may have given rise to discussions from the historical point of view, it is quite certain, in any case, that this form was not that of a pyramid; these are facts that must necessarily be taken into account in the interpretation of the biblical texts that relate to the "cornerstone"[32]. The "pyramidion,"

31 The "legends" of companionage in all its branches bear witness to it, no less than the "survivals" proper to old operative masonry that we have considered here.

32 It could therefore in no way be a matter, as some have claimed, of an allusion to an incident that occurred in the construction of the "Great Pyramid" and following which the latter would have remained unfinished, which is moreover a very doubtful hypothesis in itself and a historical question probably insoluble; moreover, this "unfinishedness" itself would go directly against the symbolism according to which the stone

that is to say the stone that forms the upper point of the pyramid, is in no way a "keystone"; it is nonetheless the "crowning" of the edifice, and one may remark that it reproduces in reduction the entire form, as if the whole of the structure were thus synthesized in this unique stone; the expression "head of the corner," in the literal sense, suits it well, and also the figurative sense of the Hebrew name of the "corner" to designate the "chief," all the more so since the pyramid, starting from the multiplicity of the base to arrive gradually at the unity of the summit, is often taken as the symbol of a hierarchy. On the other hand, according to what we explained previously concerning the summit and the four corners of the base, in connection with the signification of the Arabic word rukn, one could say that the form of the pyramid is in a certain sense contained implicitly in every architectural structure; the "solar" symbolism of this form, which we indicated then, is moreover found more particularly expressed in the "pyramidion," as is clearly shown by various archaeological descriptions cited by Mr. Coomaraswamy: the central point or the summit corresponds to the sun itself, and the four faces (each of which is comprised between two extreme "rays" delimiting the domain that it represents) to so many secondary aspects of this same sun, in relation with the four cardinal points toward which these faces are turned respectively. Despite all this, it nonetheless remains true that the "pyramidion" is only a particular case of the "cornerstone" and represents it only in a special traditional form, that of the ancient Egyptians; in order to correspond to the Judeo-Christian symbolism of this same stone, which belongs to another traditional form, assuredly very different from that one, it lacks an essential character, which is that of being a "keystone."

That said, we can return to the representation of the "cornerstone" under the form of a diamond: A. Coomaraswamy, in the article to which we have referred, starts from a remark that has been made about the German word Eckstein, which precisely has both the sense of "cornerstone" and that of "diamond"[33]; and he recalls in this connection

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that had been rejected finally takes its eminent place as "head of the corner."

33 Stoudt, *Consider the lilies, how they grow*, concerning the signification of an ornamental motif in the form of a diamond, explained by writings in which Christ is spoken of as being the Eckstein. — The double sense of this word is explained probably, from the etymological point of view, by the fact that it can be un-

the symbolic significations of the vajra, which we have already considered on various occasions: in a general way, the stone or the metal that was considered the hardest and the most brilliant has been taken, in different traditions, as "a symbol of indestructibility, invulnerability, stability, light, and immortality"; and, in particular, these qualities are very often attributed to the diamond. The idea of "indestructibility" or of "indivisibility" (the one and the other are closely linked and are expressed in Sanskrit by the same word akshara) suits evidently the stone that represents the unique principle of the edifice (true unity being essentially indivisible); that of "stability," which, in the architectural order, properly applies to a pillar, suits equally this same stone considered as constituting the capital of the "axial pillar," which itself symbolizes the "axis of the world"; and this latter, which Plato, in particular, describes as a "diamond axis," is also, on the other hand, a "pillar of light" (as symbol of Agni and as a "solar ray"); all the more does this last quality apply ("eminently," one might say) to its "crowning," which represents the very source from which it emanates as a luminous ray[34]. In Hindu and Buddhist symbolism, everything that has a "central" or "axial" signification is generally assimilated to the diamond (for example in expressions such as vajrâsana, "diamond throne"); and it is easy to realize that all these associations form part of a tradition that one can call truly universal.

That is not all yet: the diamond is regarded as the "precious stone" par excellence; now this "precious stone" is also, as such, a symbol of Christ, who is found here identified with his other symbol, the "cornerstone"; or, if one prefers, these two symbols are thus united in one. One could then say that this stone, insofar as it represents a "completion" or an "accomplishment"[35], is, in the language of the Hindu tradition, a chintâmani, which is equivalent to the Western alchemical

derstood equally as "cornerstone" and as "stone with corners," that is to say with facets; but, of course, this explanation in no way removes the value of the symbolic comparison indicated by the union of these two meanings in one and the same word.

34 The uncut diamond naturally has eight angles, and the sacrificial post (yûpa) must be made "with eight angles" (ashtashri) in order to figure the vajra (which here is also understood in its other sense of "thunderbolt"); the Pāli word attansa, literally "with eight angles," means at once "diamond" and "pillar."

35 From the "constructive" point of view, it is the "perfection" of the realization of the architect's plan; from the alchemical point of view, it is the "perfection" or the ultimate end of the "Great Work"; and there is an exact correspondence between the one and the other.

expression “philosopher’s stone”[36]; and it is very significant, in this regard, that Christian hermeticists often speak of Christ as being the true “philosopher’s stone,” no less than as being the “cornerstone”[37]. We are thus brought back to what we said previously, concerning the two senses in which the Arabic expression rukn el-arkân can be understood, of the correspondence that exists between the two symbolisms, architectural and alchemical; and, to conclude with a remark of an entirely general scope this already long study, but doubtless still incomplete, for the subject is one of those that are almost inexhaustible, we can add that this correspondence itself is at bottom only a particular case of that which likewise exists, although in a way that is perhaps not always as manifest, between all the traditional sciences and all the traditional arts, because they are all, in reality, only so many expressions and diverse applications of the same truths of a principial and universal order.

36 The diamond among stones and gold among metals are both what there is of most precious, and they likewise have a “luminous” and “solar” character; but the diamond, just like the “philosopher’s stone” to which it is here assimilated, is regarded as more precious still than gold.

37 The symbolism of the “cornerstone” is expressly mentioned, for example, in various passages of the hermetic works of Robert Fludd, cited by A. E. Waite, *The Secret Tradition in Freemasonry,* pp. 27–28; it must moreover be said that these texts seem to contain the confusion with the “foundation stone” of which we spoke at the beginning; and what the author who reports them himself says of the “cornerstone,” in several places in the same book, is scarcely calculated either to clarify the question and can only contribute rather to maintain still further this same confusion.

THE SACRED HEART AND THE LEGEND OF THE HOLY GRAIL

In one of his most recent articles (Regnabit, June 1925), M. Charbonneau-Lassay very rightly points out, as being connected with what one might call the "prehistory of the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus," the legend of the Holy Grail, written in the twelfth century, but much earlier in its origins, since it is in reality a Christian adaptation of very ancient Celtic traditions. The idea of this comparison had already occurred to us on the occasion of the earlier article, extremely interesting from the point of view we are adopting, entitled The Human Heart and the Notion of the Heart of God in the Religion of Ancient Egypt (November 1924)[1], from which we shall recall the following passage: "In the hieroglyphs, a sacred script in which the image of the thing often represents the very word that designates it, the heart was nevertheless represented only by an emblem: the vessel. Is not the heart of man in fact the vessel in which his life is continually elaborated with his blood?" This vessel, taken as a symbol of the heart and substituting for it in Egyptian ideography, immediately made us think of the Holy Grail, all the more so since in the latter, beyond the general meaning of the symbol (considered moreover under both its divine and human aspects), we see yet another special and much more direct relation with the very Heart of Christ.

Indeed, the Holy Grail is the cup that contained the precious blood of Christ, and that contained it even twice, since it served first at the Last Supper, and then Joseph of Arimathea collected in it the blood and the water that flowed from the wound opened by the centurion's lance in the side of the Redeemer. This cup thus in some way substitutes for the Heart of Christ as the receptacle of His blood; it takes, so to speak, its place and becomes as it were a symbolic equivalent of it; and is it not still more remarkable, under these conditions, that the vessel had already anciently been an emblem of the heart? Moreover, the cup, under one

1 Cf. Idem, "Le cœur humain et la notion du Cœur de Dieu dans l'ancienne Égypte," Regnabit, 4th year, no. 6, November 1924, pp. 374–383.

form or another, plays, as much as the heart itself, a very important role in many ancient traditions; and no doubt this was so in particular among the Celts, since it is from them that there came what constituted the very basis, or at least the framework, of the legend of the Holy Grail. It is regrettable that one can scarcely know with precision what the form of this tradition was prior to Christianity, as indeed happens with everything that concerns Celtic doctrines, for which oral teaching was always the sole mode of transmission employed; but on the other hand there are enough concordances for one to be at least certain of the meaning of the principal symbols that figured in it, and that is, after all, what is most essential.

But let us return to the legend in the form in which it has come down to us; what it says about the very origin of the Grail is most worthy of attention: this cup is said to have been cut by the angels from an emerald that fell from the forehead of Lucifer at the time of his fall. This emerald strikingly recalls the urnā, the frontal pearl which, in Hindu iconography, often takes the place of the third eye of Shiva, representing what one might call the "sense of eternity." This comparison seems to us more apt than any other to shed perfect light on the symbolism of the Grail; and one can even discern in it an additional relation with the heart, which is, for the Hindu tradition as for many others, but perhaps still more clearly, the center of the integral being, and to which, consequently, this sense of eternity must be directly connected.

It is then said that the Grail was entrusted to Adam in the earthly Paradise, but that, at the time of his fall, Adam in turn lost it, for he could not take it with him when he was driven out of Eden; and this again becomes quite clear with the meaning we have just indicated. Man, removed from his original center by his own fault, henceforth found himself enclosed within the temporal sphere; he could no longer rejoin the unique point from which all things are contemplated under the aspect of eternity. The earthly Paradise, in fact, was truly the "Center of the World," everywhere symbolically assimilated to the divine Heart; and can one not say that Adam, so long as he was in Eden, truly lived in the Heart of God?

What follows is more enigmatic: Seth obtained permission to reenter the earthly Paradise and was thus able to recover the precious vessel; now Seth is one of the figures of the Redeemer, all the more so since his very name expresses the ideas of foundation and stability, and in some way announces the restoration of the primordial order destroyed by the fall of man. There was therefore from that time at least a partial restoration, in the sense that Seth and those who after him possessed the Grail could thereby establish, somewhere on earth, a spiritual center that was like an image of the lost Paradise. The legend, moreover, does not say where or by whom the Grail was preserved until the time of Christ, nor how its transmission was ensured; but the Celtic origin that is attributed to it must probably suggest that the Druids had a part in it and must be counted among the regular guardians of the primordial tradition. In any case, the existence of such a spiritual center, or even of several, simultaneously or successively, does not seem open to doubt, whatever one may have to think about their localization; what is to be noted is that everywhere and always these centers were given, among other designations, that of "Heart of the World," and that, in all traditions, the descriptions relating to them are based on an identical symbolism, which it is possible to follow down to the most precise details. Does this not sufficiently show that the Grail, or what is thus represented, already had, prior to Christianity, and indeed at all times, one of the closest possible links with the divine Heart and with Emmanuel—that is to say, with the manifestation, virtual or real according to the ages, but always present, of the eternal Word within earthly humanity?

After the death of Christ, the Holy Grail was, according to the legend, transported to Great Britain by Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus; then begins the unfolding of the history of the Knights of the Round Table and of their exploits, which we do not intend to follow here. The Round Table was destined to receive the Grail when one of the Knights should have succeeded in conquering it and bringing it from Great Britain to Armorica, and this table is also a symbol that is probably very ancient, one of those that were associated with the idea of those spiritual centers to which we have just alluded. The circular form of the table is

moreover linked to the "zodiacal cycle" (yet another symbol that would merit being studied more specifically) by the presence around it of twelve principal personages, a particularity that is found again in the constitution of all the centers in question. That being so, can one not see in the number of the twelve Apostles a mark, among a multitude of others, of the perfect conformity of Christianity with the primordial tradition, to which the name "pre-Christianity" would be so exactly suited? And on the other hand, with regard to the Round Table, we have noted a strange concordance in the symbolic revelations made to Marie des Vallées (see Regnabit, November 1924), in which mention is made of "a round table of jasper, which represents the Heart of Our Lord," at the same time as there is mention of "a garden which is the Blessed Sacrament of the altar," and which, with its "four fountains of living water," is mysteriously identified with the earthly Paradise; is this not once again a rather astonishing and unexpected confirmation of the relationships we pointed out above?

Naturally, these notes, too rapid, cannot claim to constitute a complete study of so little-known a question; for the moment we must confine ourselves to giving simple indications, and we are well aware that there are here considerations which, at first sight, are likely to surprise somewhat those who are not familiar with ancient traditions and with their habitual modes of symbolic expression; but we reserve the intention of developing them and justifying them more fully later, in articles in which we think we shall also be able to take up many other points that are no less worthy of interest.

In the meantime, we shall still mention, with regard to the legend of the Holy Grail, a strange complication that we have not taken into account up to now: by one of those verbal assimilations that often play in symbolism a role that is not negligible, and that moreover perhaps have reasons more profound than one might imagine at first sight, the Grail is at once a vessel (grasale) and a book (gradale or graduale). In certain versions, the two meanings are even closely brought together, for the book then becomes an inscription traced by Christ or by an angel on the cup itself. We do not at present intend to draw any conclusion from this,

although there are easy comparisons to be made with the “Book of Life” and with certain elements of apocalyptic symbolism.

Let us also add that the legend associates with the Grail other objects, and notably a lance, which, in the Christian adaptation, is none other than the lance of the centurion Longinus; but what is quite curious is the preexistence of this lance or of one of its equivalents as a symbol in some way complementary to the cup in ancient traditions. On the other hand, among the Greeks, the lance of Achilles was reputed to heal the wounds it had caused; the medieval legend attributes precisely the same virtue to the lance of the Passion. And this recalls another similarity of the same kind: in the myth of Adonis (whose name, moreover, means “the Lord”), when the hero is mortally struck by the tusk of a boar (replacing here the lance), his blood, as it spreads upon the ground, gives birth to a flower; now M. Charbonneau pointed out in Regnabit (January 1925) “a host iron, from the twelfth century, in which one sees the blood from the wounds of the Crucified falling in droplets that are transformed into roses, and the thirteenth-century stained-glass window of the Cathedral of Angers where the divine blood, flowing in streams, likewise blossoms in the form of roses”. We shall have to speak again shortly of floral symbolism, considered under a somewhat different aspect; but, whatever the multiplicity of meanings that almost all symbols present, all this is completed and harmonized perfectly, and this very multiplicity, far from being an inconvenience or a defect, is on the contrary, for one who knows how to understand it, one of the principal advantages of a language much less narrowly limited than ordinary language.

To conclude these notes, we shall indicate a few symbols which, in various traditions, sometimes substitute for that of the cup and which are identical with it in essence; this is not to depart from our subject, for the Grail itself, as one can easily realize from all that we have just said, has at its origin no other meaning than that which the sacred vessel generally has wherever it is encountered, and which notably, in the East, is possessed by the sacrificial cup containing the Vedic Soma (or the Mazdean Haoma), that extraordinary eucharistic “prefiguration” to

which we shall perhaps return on some other occasion. What the Soma properly represents is the "drink of immortality" (the Amritā of the Hindus, the Ambrosia of the Greeks, two etymologically similar words), which confers or restores, to those who receive it with the required dispositions, that "sense of eternity" of which there has been previous mention.

One of the symbols of which we wish to speak is the triangle with its point directed downward; it is like a kind of schematic representation of the sacrificial cup, and it is encountered as such in certain yantras or geometric symbols of India. On the other hand, what is very remarkable from our point of view is that the same figure is also a symbol of the heart, of which it moreover reproduces the form by simplifying it; the "triangle of the heart" is a common expression in Eastern traditions. This leads us to an observation that also has its interest: namely, that the representation of the heart inscribed in a triangle thus disposed has in itself nothing but what is perfectly legitimate, whether it be a question of the human heart or of the divine Heart, and that it is even quite significant when it is related to the emblems used by certain Christian hermeticism of the Middle Ages, whose intentions were always fully orthodox. If one has sometimes wished, in modern times, to attach to such a representation a blasphemous meaning (see Regnabit, August–September 1924)[2], it is because one has, consciously or not, altered the original meaning of the symbols, even to the point of reversing their normal value; there is here a phenomenon of which many examples could be cited, and which moreover finds its explanation in the fact that certain symbols are indeed susceptible of a double interpretation and have, as it were, two opposite faces. The serpent, for example, and also the lion, do they not signify at once, and according to the cases, Christ and Satan? We cannot think of setting forth here on this subject a general theory that would carry us very far afield; but it will be understood that there is here something that makes the handling of symbols very delicate, and also that this point requires very special attention when it is a matter of discovering the real meaning of certain

2 Cf. Idem, "L'Iconographie ancienne du Cœur de Jésus. Les Représentations blasphématoires du Cœur de Jésus " Regnabit, 4th year, no. 3-4, August-September 1924, pp. 187-195, reprinted in Idem, Studies in Christian Symbolism, op. cit., pp. 245-253.

emblems and translating them correctly.

Another symbol that frequently is equivalent to that of the cup is a floral symbol: the flower, indeed, does it not evoke by its form the idea of a "receptacle," and does one not speak of the "calyx" of a flower? In the East, the symbolic flower par excellence is the lotus; in the West, it is most often the rose that plays the same role. Naturally, we do not mean to say that this is the sole meaning of the latter, any more than of the lotus, since, on the contrary, we ourselves indicated another one previously; but we would willingly see it in the design embroidered on this altar frontal of the abbey of Fontevrault (Regnabit, January 1925, figure p. 106)[3], where the rose is placed at the foot of a lance along which drops of blood rain down. This rose appears there associated with the lance exactly as the cup is elsewhere, and it seems indeed to gather the drops of blood rather than to result from the transformation of one of them; but moreover, the two meanings complement one another much more than they oppose one another, for these drops, in falling upon the rose, vivify it and cause it to blossom. It is the "heavenly dew," according to the figure so often employed in relation with the idea of Redemption, or with the related ideas of regeneration and resurrection; but this again would require long explanations, even if we were to confine ourselves to bringing out the concordance of the different traditions with regard to this other symbol.

On the other hand, since mention has been made here of the Rosicrucians in connection with Luther's seal (January 1925)[4], we shall

3 Cf. Idem, "L'Iconographie ancienne du Cœur de Jésus. I. À propos de la Rose emblématique de Martin Luther. II. La Rose, fleur allégorique des Saintes-Plaies et du Sang de Jésus-Christ " cit., p. 106, reprinted in Idem, Studies in Christian Symbolism, op. cit., p. 271. Here is the illustration in question:

Détail de canon d'autel brodé en l'abbaye de Fontevrault. — XVI^e siècle.

4 [Here is the illustration in question:]

La Rose emblématique de Martin Luther.

say that this hermetic emblem was originally specifically Christian, whatever “the false more or less naturalistic interpretations” that have been given of it starting from the eighteenth century; and is it not remarkable that the rose occupies there, at the center of the cross, the very place of the Sacred Heart? Apart from representations in which the five wounds of the Crucified are figured by as many roses, the central rose, when it stands alone, can very well be identified with the Heart itself, with the vessel that contains the blood, which is the center of life and also the center of the entire being.

There is still at least one other symbolic equivalent of the cup: it is the lunar crescent; but this, in order to be suitably explained, would require developments that would be entirely outside the scope of the present study; we therefore mention it only so as not to neglect entirely any side of the question.

From all the comparisons that we have just indicated, we shall already draw one consequence that we hope to be able to make still more manifest later: when one finds everywhere such concordances, is there not there more than a simple indication of the existence of a primordial tradition? And how is one to explain that, most often, even those who believe themselves obliged in principle to admit this primordial tradition no longer think of it afterward and reason in fact exactly as if it had never existed, or at least as if nothing of it had been preserved over the course of the centuries? If one is willing to reflect on what is abnormal in such an attitude, one will perhaps be less disposed to be astonished at certain considerations, which, in truth, appear strange only by virtue of the mental habits proper to our time. Moreover, it suffices to search a little, on condition of bringing no preconceived ideas to the task, to discover on all sides the marks of this essential doctrinal unity, whose consciousness may sometimes have been obscured in humanity, but which has never entirely disappeared; and, as one advances in this research, points of comparison multiply as if of themselves and new proofs appear at every moment; certainly, the Quærite et invenietis of the Gospel is not an empty phrase.

THE CHRISM AND THE HEART IN OLD CORPORATE MARKS

In an article, of an otherwise purely documentary character, devoted to the study of Arms with astrological and talismanic motifs, and published in the Revue de l'Histoire des Religions (July–October 1924), M. W. Deonna, of Geneva, comparing the signs that appear on these arms with other more or less similar symbols, is led to speak in particular of the "four of chiffre," which was "in use in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries[1] as a maker's mark for printers, tapestry-makers, as a commercial mark for merchants, as a family and house mark for private persons, who put it on their tomb slabs, on their coats of arms." He notes that this sign "lends itself to all sorts of combinations, with the cross, the globe, the heart, associates with the owners' monograms, becomes complicated by adventitious bars," and he reproduces a certain number of examples. We think that it was essentially a "mastery mark," common to many diverse corporations, to which the private persons and families who made use of this sign were doubtless united by certain ties, often hereditary.

M. Deonna then speaks, rather summarily, of the origin and the signification of this mark: "M. Jusselin," he says, "derives it from the Constantinian monogram, already freely interpreted and disfigured on Merovingian and Carolingian documents[2], but this hypothesis appears entirely arbitrary, and no analogy imposes it." Such is not our view, and this assimilation must on the contrary be quite natural, for, for our part, we had always made it of ourselves, without knowing anything of the specialized works that might exist on the question, and we would not even have believed that it could be contested, so evident did it seem to us. But let us continue, and see what the other explanations proposed are: "Is it the 4 of Arabic numerals, substituted for Roman numerals in

1 The same sign was already much employed in the fifteenth century, at least in France, and notably in printers' marks. We have noted the following examples: Wolf (Georges), printer-bookseller in Paris, 1489; Syber (Jehan), printer in Lyon, 1478; Rembolt (Bertholde), printer in Paris, 1489.

2 Origin of the tapestry-makers' monogram, in the Bulletin monumental, 1922, pp. 433–435.

European manuscripts before the eleventh century?… Must one suppose that it represents the mystical value of the number 4, which goes back to antiquity, and which the moderns have preserved?" M. Deonna does not reject this interpretation, but he prefers another: he supposes "that it is an astrological sign," that of Jupiter.

In truth, these various hypotheses do not necessarily exclude one another: there may very well have been, in this case as in many others, superposition and even fusion of several symbols into one, to which multiple significations are thereby attached; there is nothing here that ought to astonish, since, as we said previously, this multiplicity of meanings is as it were inherent in symbolism, of which it even constitutes one of the greatest advantages as a mode of expression. Only, one must naturally be able to recognize what the first and principal meaning of the symbol is; and here we persist in thinking that this meaning is given by the identification with the Chrism, whereas the others are associated with it only in a secondary capacity.

It is certain that the astrological sign of Jupiter, of which we give here the two principal forms (fig. 1), presents, in its general appearance, a resemblance to the number 4; it is also certain that the use of this sign may have a relation with the idea of "mastery," and we shall return to this farther on; but, for us, this element, in the symbolism of the mark in question, can only come in third place. Let us note, moreover, that the very origin of this sign of Jupiter is quite uncertain, since some wish to see in it a representation of lightning, whereas, for others, it is simply the initial of the name of Zeus.

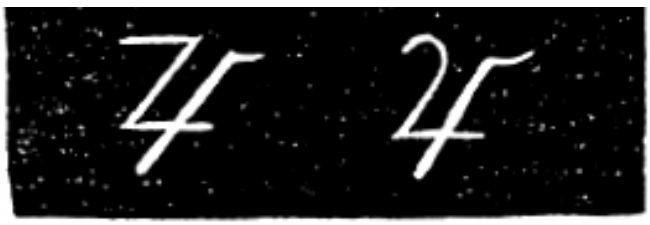

FIG. 1

On the other hand, it does not seem deniable to us that what M. Deonna calls the "mystical value" of the number 4 has also played a role here,

and even a more important role, for we would give it the second place in this complex symbolism. One may remark, in this regard, that the number 4, in all the marks where it appears, has a form that is exactly that of a cross whose two extremities are joined by an oblique line (fig. 2);

FIG. 2.

now the cross was in antiquity, and notably among the Pythagoreans, the symbol of the quaternary (or more exactly one of its symbols, for there was another which was the square); and, on the other hand, the association of the cross with the monogram of Christ must have been established in the most natural way.

This remark brings us back to the Chrism; and, first of all, we must say that it is appropriate to draw a distinction between the Constantinian Chrism properly so called, the sign of the Labarum, and what is called the simple Chrism. This latter (fig. 3) appears to us as the fundamental symbol from which many others are derived more or less directly; it is regarded as formed by the union of the letters I and X, that is to say the Greek initials of the two words Iêsous Christos, and that is indeed a meaning that it received from the earliest times of Christianity; but this symbol, in itself, is much earlier, and it is one of those that are found spread a little everywhere and at all times.

FIG. 3

There is therefore here an example of that Christian adaptation of pre-Christian symbolic signs and narratives which we have already pointed out with regard to the legend of the Holy Grail; and this adaptation must appear, not only as legitimate, but in some way as necessary, to those who, like us, see in these symbols vestiges of the primordial tradition. The Grail legend is of Celtic origin; by a rather remarkable coincidence, the symbol of which we are now speaking is also found in particular among the Celts, where it is an essential element of the "rouelle" (fig. 4); this, moreover, was perpetuated through the Middle Ages, and it is not implausible to admit that even the rose-window of cathedrals can be connected with it[3].

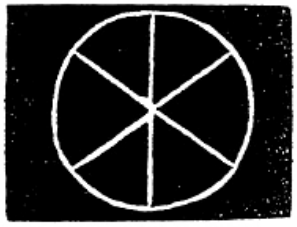

FIG. 4

There exists, in fact, a certain connection between the figure of the wheel and floral symbols with multiple significations, such as the rose and the lotus, to which we alluded in our preceding article; but this would carry us too far from our subject. As for the general signification of the wheel, in which moderns ordinarily wish to see an exclusively "solar" symbol, according to a kind of explanation that they use and abuse on all occasions, we shall say only, without being able to insist on it as much as would be necessary, that it is something quite other in reality, and that it is above all a symbol of the World, as one can be convinced notably by the study of Hindu iconography. To confine ourselves to the Celtic "rouelle"[4], we shall point out further, on the other

3 In an earlier article, M. Deonna himself recognized a relation between the "rouelle" and the Chrism (Some reflections on Symbolism, in particular in prehistoric art, in the Revue de l'Histoire des Religions, January–April 1924); we are all the more surprised to see him later deny the relation, yet more visible, that exists between the Chrism and the "four of chiffre."

4 There exist two principal types of this "rouelle," one with six spokes (fig. 4) and the other with eight (fig. 5), each of these numbers naturally having its raison d'être and its signification. It is to the first that the Chrism is related; as for the second (to which one can similarly connect, among other emblems, the "Santo Estrello," the symbolic star of Provence), it is interesting to note that it presents a very clear similarity with the Hindu lotus with eight petals.

hand, that the same origin and the same signification must very probably be attributed to the emblem that appears in the upper corner of the British flag (fig. 6), an emblem which differs from it in sum only in that it is inscribed in a rectangle instead of being inscribed in a circumference, and in which certain Englishmen wish to see the sign of the maritime supremacy of their country[5].

Fig. 5

We shall make on this occasion an extremely important remark with regard to heraldic symbolism: namely, that the form of the simple Chrism is like a kind of general schema according to which, in blazon, the most diverse figures have been arranged.

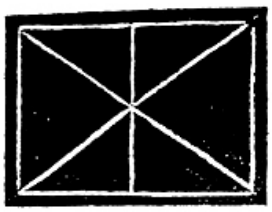

Fig. 6

Let one look, for example, at an eagle or any other heraldic bird, and it will not be difficult to realize that one effectively finds there this disposition (the head, the tail, the extremities of the wings and the feet corresponding to the six points of fig. 3); let one then look at an emblem such as the fleur-de-lis, and one will again make the same observation. It matters little, moreover, in this latter case, what the real origin of the emblem in question is, which has given rise to so many hypotheses: whether the fleur-de-lis is truly a flower, which would bring us back to the floral symbols we recalled a moment ago (the natural lily moreover has six petals), or whether it was originally a spearhead, or a bird, or a

5 The very form of the "rouelle" is found in a striking way when the same emblem is drawn on the shield borne by the allegorical figure of Albion.

bee, the ancient Chaldean symbol of royalty (hieroglyph sâr), or even a toad[6], or again, as is more probable, whether it results from the synthesis of several of these figures, in any case it is strictly in conformity with the schema of which we are speaking.

One of the reasons for this particularity must be found in the importance of the meanings attached to the number 6, for the figure we are considering is nothing other, fundamentally, than one of the geometric symbols that correspond to this number. If one joins its extremities two by two (fig. 7), one obtains another well-known senary symbol, the double triangle (fig. 8), to which one most often gives the name "seal of Solomon"[7].

FIG. 7 FIG. 8 FIG. 9

This figure is very frequently used among Jews and among Arabs, but it is also a Christian emblem; it was even, as M. Charbonneau-Lassay has pointed out to us, one of the old symbols of Christ, as was also another equivalent figure, the six-pointed star (fig. 9), which is in sum only a simple variant of it, and as is, of course, the Chrism itself, which is yet another reason to establish a close connection between these signs. Christian hermeticism of the Middle Ages saw, among other things, in the two opposed and interlaced triangles, one of which is like the reflection or inverted image of the other, a representation of the union of the two natures, divine and human, in the person of Christ; and the number 6 has among its meanings those of union and mediation, which suit the incarnate Word perfectly. On the other hand, this same number is, according to the Hebrew Kabbalah, the number of creation (the work

6 This opinion, however strange it may seem, must have been accepted fairly early, for, in the fifteenth-century tapestries of the cathedral of Reims, the banner of Clovis bears three toads. — It is moreover quite possible that, originally, this toad was in reality a frog, an ancient symbol of resurrection.

7 This figure is also sometimes called "shield of David," and also "shield of Michael"; this latter designation could give rise to very interesting considerations.

of the six days), and, in this respect, the attribution of its symbol to the Word is no less well justified: it is like a kind of graphic rendering of the "per quem omnia facta sunt" of the Creed[8].

Now, what is to be noted especially from the point of view we are adopting in the present study is that the double triangle was chosen, in the sixteenth century or perhaps even earlier, as an emblem and rallying sign by certain corporations; it even became in this capacity, especially in Germany, the ordinary signboard of the taverns or breweries where these corporations held their meetings[9]. It was in some way a general and common mark, whereas the more or less complex figures in which the "four of chiffre" appears were personal marks, particular to each master; but is it not logical to suppose that, between these and that, there had to be a certain kinship, that very one whose existence we have just shown between the Chrism and the double triangle?

The Constantinian Chrism (fig. 10), which is formed by the union of the two Greek letters X and P, the first two of Christos, appears at first sight as immediately derived from the simple Chrism, of which it preserves exactly the fundamental disposition, and from which it differs only by the addition, to its upper part, of a loop intended to transform the I into a P.

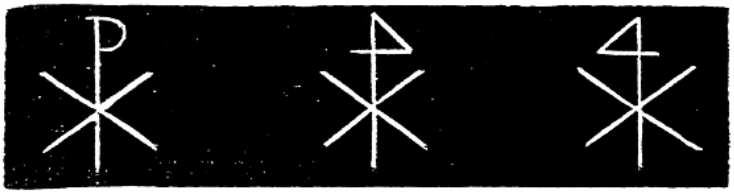

FIG. 10 FIG. 11 FIG. 12

Now, if one considers the "four of chiffre" in its simplest and most common forms, its similarity, we could even say its identity with the Constantinian Chrism, is entirely undeniable; it is especially striking

8 In China, six lines otherwise arranged likewise constitute a symbol of the Word; they also represent the middle term of the Great Triad, that is to say the Mediator between Heaven and Earth, uniting in himself the two celestial and terrestrial natures.

9 In this connection, let us note in passing a curious and fairly little-known fact: the Faust legend, which dates from about the same period, constituted the initiation ritual of printer-workers.

when the 4, or the sign that takes its form and that can also at the same time be a deformation of the P, is turned to the right (fig. 11) instead of being turned to the left (fig. 12), for one encounters these two orientations indifferently[10]. Moreover, one sees a second symbolic element appear there, which did not exist in the Constantinian Chrism: we mean the presence of a sign of cruciform shape, which is introduced quite naturally by the transformation of the P into 4. Often, as can be seen on the two adjacent figures that we borrow from M. Deonna, this sign is as if underlined by the addition of a supplementary line, either horizontal (fig. 13) or vertical (fig. 14), which constitutes a kind of doubling of the cross[11].

FIG. 13 FIG. 14

It will be remarked that, in the second of these figures, the whole lower part of the Chrism has disappeared and has been replaced by a personal monogram, just as elsewhere it is replaced by various symbols; this is perhaps what gave rise to certain doubts about the identity of the sign that remains constant through all these changes; but we think that the marks that contain the complete Chrism are those that represent the primitive form, whereas the others are later modifications, in which the part that was preserved was taken for the whole, probably without the meaning ever being entirely lost from view. However, it seems that, in certain cases, the cruciform element of the symbol then passed into the foreground; that is at least what seems to us to result from the association of the "four of chiffre" with other signs, and it is this point that remains for us now to examine.

Among the signs in question, there is one that appears in the mark of a sixteenth-century tapestry preserved in the museum of Chartres (fig. 15),

10 Fig. 12 is given by M. Deonna with this note: "mark of Zachariae Palthenius, printer, Frankfurt, 1599."

11 Fig. 13: "mark with the date 1540, Geneva; doubtless Jacques Bernard, first Reformed pastor of Satigny." Fig. 14: "mark of the printer Carolus Morellus, Paris 1631."

and whose nature can admit no doubt: it is evidently, under a scarcely modified form, the "globe of the World" (fig. 16), a symbol formed by the hermetic sign of the mineral kingdom surmounted by a cross; here, the "four of chiffre" has purely and simply taken the place of the cross[12].

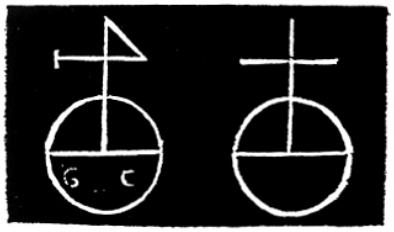

Fig. 15 Fig. 16

This "globe of the World" is essentially a sign of power, and it is so at once of temporal power and of spiritual power, for, if it is one of the insignia of imperial dignity, it is also found at every moment placed in the hand of Christ, and that not only in representations that evoke more particularly the divine Majesty, such as those of the Last Judgment, but even in figurations of the Christ Child. Thus, when this sign replaces the Chrism (and let one recall here the link that originally unites the latter to the "rouelle," another symbol of the World), one may say in sum that it is still one attribute of Christ that has substituted for another; at the same time, this new attribute is connected quite directly to the idea of "mastery," as is the sign of Jupiter, to which the upper part of the symbol may call to mind especially in such cases, but without ceasing for that to retain its cruciform value, with regard to which the comparison of the two figures above does not allow the slightest hesitation.

We next come to a group of marks that are those that directly motivated this study, because they constitute documents that should find a place especially in this Review: in fact, the essential difference between these marks and that of which we have just spoken last is that the globe is replaced there by a heart. Curiously, these two types appear as closely linked to one another, for, in some of them (fig. 17 and 18), the heart is divided by lines that are arranged exactly like those that characterize the

12 We have also seen this sign of the "globe of the World" in several printers' marks from the beginning of the sixteenth century.

"globe of the World"[13]; is there not there the indication of a kind of equivalence, at least in a certain respect, and would that not already be sufficient to suggest that it is here a question of the "Heart of the World"?

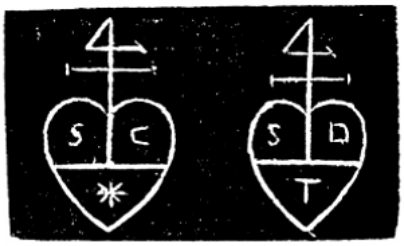

FIG. 17 FIG. 18

In other examples, the straight lines drawn inside the heart are replaced by curved lines that seem to outline the auricles, and within which the initials are enclosed (fig. 19 and 20); but these marks seem to be more recent than the preceding ones[14], so that it is probably a rather late modification, and perhaps intended simply to give the figure a less geometric and more ornamental aspect. Finally, there exist more complicated variants, where the principal symbol is accompanied by secondary signs which manifestly do not change its signification; and even, in the one that we reproduce (fig. 21), it is permissible to think that the stars do no more than mark more clearly the celestial character that it is fitting to recognize in it[15].

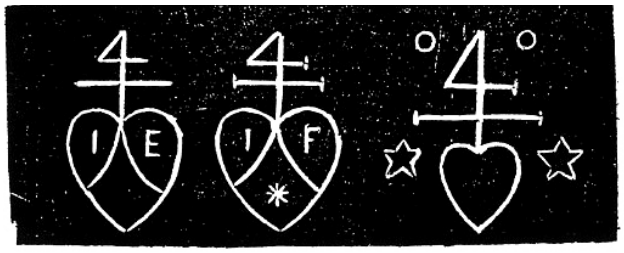

FIG. 19 FIG. 20 FIG. 21

By that we mean that one should, in our opinion, see in all these figures the Heart of Christ, and that it is scarcely possible to see anything else in them, since this heart is surmounted by a cross, and even, for all those

13 Fig. 17: "sixteenth-century tapestry mark, museum of Chartres." Fig. 18: "mastery mark of Samuel de Tournes, on a pewter pot by Pierre Royaume, Geneva, 1719."

14 Fig. 19: "mark of Jacques Eynard, Genevan merchant, on a seventeenth-century stained-glass window." Fig. 20: "mastery mark, on a pewter dish by Jacques Morel, Geneva, 1719."

15 Fig. 21: "mastery mark on a pewter dish by Pierre Royaume, Geneva, 1609."

that we have before our eyes, by a cross doubled by the addition to the number 4 of a horizontal line.

We shall open here a parenthesis to point out a further curious comparison: the schematization of these figures yields a known hermetic symbol (fig. 22), which is nothing other than the inverted position of that of alchemical sulphur (fig. 23).

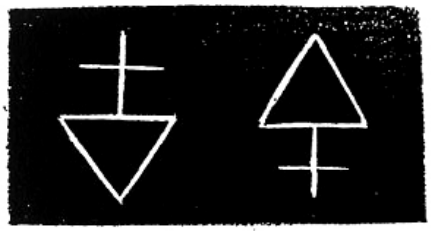

Fig. 22 Fig. 23

We rediscover here the inverted triangle, whose equivalence with the heart and the cup we indicated in our preceding article (see Regnabit, IX, 186); isolated, this triangle is the alchemical sign of water, whereas the upright triangle, the point directed upward, is that of fire. Now, among the different meanings that water constantly has in the most diverse traditions, there is one that is particularly interesting to retain here: it is the symbol of Grace and of the regeneration effected by it in the being who receives it; let one recall only, in this regard, baptismal water, the four fountains of living water of the earthly Paradise, and also the water flowing with the blood from the Heart of Christ, an inexhaustible source of Grace. Finally, and this again corroborates this explanation, the inversion of the symbol of sulphur signifies the descent of spiritual influences into the "lower world," that is to say into the earthly and human world; it is, in other terms, the "heavenly dew" of which we have already spoken[16]. These are the hermetic emblems to which we had alluded, and one will agree that their true meaning is very far removed from the falsified interpretations that certain contemporary sects claim to give of them!

16 F ig. 24, which is the same hermetic symbol accompanied by initials, comes from a funerary slab of Geneva (lapidary collections, no. 573). Fig. 25, which is a modification of it, is mentioned in these terms by M. Deonna: "keystone of a house at the Molard, Geneva, demolished in 1889, mark of Jean du Villard, with the date 1576."

That said, let us return to our corporate marks, in order to formulate in a few words the conclusions that seem to us to emerge most clearly from all that we have just set forth.

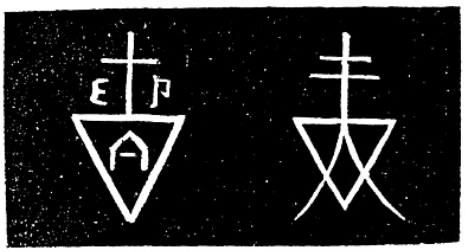

Fig. 24 Fig. 25

In the first place, we believe we have sufficiently established that it is indeed the Chrism that constitutes the fundamental type from which all these marks derive, and from which, consequently, they draw their principal signification. In the second place, when one sees, in certain of these marks, the heart take the place of the Chrism and of other symbols which, in an undeniable way, all relate directly to Christ, does one not have the right to affirm clearly that this heart is indeed the Heart of Christ? Next, as we already remarked a moment ago, the fact that this same heart is surmounted by the cross, or by a sign surely equivalent to the cross, or even, better still, by the one and the other together, this fact, we say, supports this affirmation as solidly as possible, for, in any other hypothesis, we do not see well how one could provide a plausible explanation of it. Finally, is not the idea of inscribing one's name, in the form of initials or a monogram, within the very Heart of Christ, an idea well worthy of the piety of our ancestors[17]?

We shall end our study on this last reflection, being content this time to have, while clarifying a few interesting points for religious symbolism in general, brought to the old iconography of the Sacred Heart a contribution that has come to us from a somewhat unexpected source, and wishing only that, among the readers of Regnabit, there may be some who can complete it by indicating other documents of the same

17 It is to be remarked that most of the marks we have reproduced, being borrowed from the documentation of M. Deonna, are of Genevan provenance and must have belonged to Protestants; but perhaps there is no cause to be overly astonished at this, if one considers on the other hand that Cromwell's chaplain, Thomas Goodwin, devoted a book to devotion to the Heart of Jesus. One must be pleased, we think, to see the Protestants themselves thus bringing their testimony in favor of the devotion to the Sacred Heart.

kind, for there must certainly exist here and there in fairly considerable number, and it would suffice to collect and bring them together to form an ensemble of testimonies that is truly impressive[18].

18 It would be particularly interesting to investigate whether the heart is sometimes found in the marks of master masons and stonecutters that are seen on many old monuments, and notably on religious monuments. M. Deonna reproduces a few marks of stonecutters, recorded at Saint Peter's cathedral in Geneva, among which are found inverted triangles, some accompanied by a cross placed below or inside; it is therefore not improbable that the heart also figured among the emblems in use in this corporation.

THE RADIANT HEART AND THE ENFLAMED HEART

There are words which, under the influence of wholly modern conceptions, have undergone, in current usage, a strange deviation and, as it were, a weakening of their original meaning; the word "heart" is one of these. Is it not the case today, indeed, that people make "heart," when taken figuratively, exclusively synonymous with "feeling"? And is it not for this reason that, as the Rev. Fr. Anizan very rightly observed (Regnabit, February 1926), the Sacred Heart is generally envisaged only from the restricted angle of "devotion," understood as something purely affective? This way of seeing has even imposed itself so thoroughly that one has come no longer to notice that the word "heart" formerly had quite other acceptions; or at least, when one encounters these in certain texts where they are all too evident, one persuades oneself that these are only exceptional significations and, so to speak, accidental. Thus, in a recent book on the Sacred Heart, we had the surprise of noting the following: after indicating that the word "heart" is employed to designate inner feelings, the seat of desire, of suffering, of affection, of moral conscience, of the strength of the soul[1], all things of an emotive order, one adds simply, lastly, that it "even sometimes signifies intelligence"[2]. Now it is this last sense which is in reality the first, and which, among the ancients, has been regarded everywhere and always as the principal and fundamental sense, whereas the others, when they are likewise found, are only secondary and derivative and scarcely represent anything but an extension of the primary acceptation.

For the ancients, indeed, the heart was the "vital center," which it is in fact first of all in the physiological order, and at the same time, by transposition or, if one prefers, by analogical correspondence, it represented the center of the being from all points of view, but in the first place with respect to intelligence; it symbolized the point of contact

1 The word courage is in fact derived from cœur ("heart").

2 R. P. A. Hamon, S. J., Histoire de la Dévotion au Sacré-Cœur; T. I, 1, L'Aube la Dévotion, Introduction, p. XVIII.

of the individual with the Universal, the place of his communication with the divine Intelligence itself. Such a conception is found even among the Greeks, in Aristotle for example; and, on the other hand, it is common to all the traditional doctrines of the East, where it plays one of the most important roles. We think we shall have occasion to show, in other studies, that this is particularly so among the Hindus; we therefore content ourselves, for the moment, with pointing out this fact without dwelling on it further. It has been recognized that "for the ancient Egyptians, the heart was as much the seat of intelligence as of affection"[3]; this is what M. Charbonneau-Lassay recalled recently here (February 1926, p. 210): "The sage of Egypt did not regard the heart only as the affective organ of man, but also as the true source of his intelligence; for him, thought was born from a movement of the heart, and externalized itself by speech; the brain was considered only as a relay where speech can stop, but which it often crosses in a spontaneous impulse." Among the Arabs too, the heart is regarded as the seat of intelligence, not of that wholly individual faculty which is reason, but of the universal Intelligence (El-Aqlu) in its relations with the human being whom it penetrates from within, since it thus resides in his very center, and illuminates him with its radiance.

This gives the explanation of a symbolism that is encountered very frequently, and according to which the heart is assimilated to the sun and the brain to the moon. For, indeed, rational and discursive thought, of which the brain is the organ or instrument, is only a reflection of true intelligence, as the light of the moon is only a reflection of that of the sun. The latter, even in the physical sense, is truly the "Heart of the World" which it illuminates and vivifies: "O thou whose form is a dazzling circle which is the Heart of the World…," says Proclus in his Hymn to the Sun. And, in conformity with the constitutive analogy that exists between the human being and the World, between the "Microcosm" and the "Macrocosm," as the hermeticists said, the transposition we indicated a moment ago is effected here as well: the

3 E. Drioton, La Vie spirituelle dans l'ancienne Égypte, in the Revue de Philosophie, November–December 1925. – But why, immediately after having made this remark, say only that the expression "to put God in one's heart" meant "to make God the constant term of one's affections and desires"? What becomes here of intelligence?

sun represents the “Center of the World” in all orders of existence; hence the symbol of the “spiritual Sun,” to which we shall have to return in the continuation of these studies.

Now, how is it that all this is so completely forgotten by moderns, and that they have come to change the meaning attributed to the heart as we said at the outset? The fault is doubtless in large part due to “rationalism,” we mean the tendency to identify purely and simply reason and intelligence, to make reason the whole of intelligence, or at least its upper part, to believe that there is nothing above reason. This rationalism, of which Descartes is the first clearly characterized representative, has for three centuries penetrated all Western thought; and we are not speaking only of properly philosophical thought, but also of common thought, which has been influenced by it more or less indirectly. It is Descartes who claimed to locate in the brain the “seat of the soul,” because he saw there the seat of rational thought; and indeed it was the same thing in his eyes, the soul being for him the “thinking substance” and being nothing but that. This conception is far from being as natural as it seems to our contemporaries, who, by the effect of habit, have become for the most part as incapable of freeing themselves from it as of leaving the general point of view of Cartesian dualism, between the two terms of which oscillates the whole subsequent philosophy.

The immediate consequence of rationalism is the negation or ignorance of the pure and supra-rational intellect, of the “intellectual intuition” that antiquity and the Middle Ages had known; in fact, some philosophers of our time do indeed try to escape rationalism and even speak of “intuition,” but, by a strange reversal of things, they have in view only a sensible and infra-rational intuition. The intelligence that resides in the heart being thus misunderstood, and the reason that resides in the brain having usurped its illuminating role, there remained for the heart only the sole possibility of being the seat of affectivity; and it is thus that Pascal already understands the “heart” in the exclusive sense of “feeling.” Moreover, this has happened: the modern world has seen the birth of another tendency allied to rationalism and which is as it were its counterpart, what we may call “sentimentalism,” that is to say the

tendency to see in feeling what is most profound and most elevated in the being, to affirm its supremacy over intelligence; and such a thing could only occur because intelligence had first been reduced to reason alone. In this as in many other domains, moderns have lost the notion of the normal order and the sense of all true hierarchy; they no longer know how to put each thing in its proper place; how can one be astonished that so many of them cannot recognize the true "Center" toward which all the powers of the being ought to be oriented?

Perhaps some will find that, in presenting things in abbreviated form as we have just done, we simplify them a little too much; and assuredly there is something there too complex in reality for us to claim to set it forth completely in a few lines; but we nevertheless think that this summary does not alter historical truth in its essential features. We readily acknowledge that one would be wrong to consider Descartes as the sole party responsible for the whole intellectual deviation of the modern West, and that even, if he was able to exercise so great an influence, it is because his conceptions corresponded to a state of mind that was already that of his time, and to which he in sum did no more than give a definite and systematic expression; but it is precisely for that reason that the name of Descartes takes on in some way the character of a symbol, and that it can serve better than any other to represent tendencies that doubtless existed before him, but that had not yet been formulated as they were in his philosophy.

That being said, one may pose this question: for moderns, the heart finds itself reduced to no longer designating anything but the center of affectivity; but can it not legitimately be considered as such, even by those for whom it represents above all the center of intelligence? Indeed, if it is the center of the integral being, it must be so as much with respect to what is in question as from any other point of view, and we see no inconvenience in recognizing it; what seems unacceptable to us is that such an interpretation should become exclusive or even simply predominant. For us, the relation established with affectivity results directly from considering the heart as "vital center," life and affectivity being two things very close to one another, if not quite connected,

whereas the relation with intelligence implies a transposition into another order. It is so if one takes a point of departure in the sensible order; but if, on the contrary, one descends from the higher to the lower, from the principle to the consequences, it is the latter relation which, as we said at the beginning, is the first, since it is the Word, that is to say the divine Intelligence, which is truly the "spiritual Sun," the "Heart of the World." All the rest, including the physiological role of the heart, as well as the physical role of the sun, is only reflection and symbol of this supreme reality; and one may recall, in this regard, what we said previously (January 1926) on nature envisaged as a symbol of the supernatural.

It is appropriate to add that, in what we have just indicated, we have understood affectivity only in its immediate sense, literal if one wishes, and purely human; and this sense is moreover the only one moderns think of when they employ the word "heart"; but are not certain terms borrowed from affectivity susceptible of being transposed analogically into a higher order? This seems incontestable to us for words such as Love and Charity: they have been employed thus, manifestly, in certain doctrines of the Middle Ages, basing themselves moreover in this regard on the Gospel itself[4]; and on the other hand, among many mystics, affective language appears above all as a mode of symbolic expression for things which, in themselves, are inexpressible. Some will perhaps find that we are only stating here a very elementary truth; but nevertheless it is not useless to recall it, for, on the last point, we mean as regards mystics, the mistakes of psychologists show only too well what the state of mind of most of our contemporaries is: they see there nothing other than feeling in the narrowest sense of this word, purely human emotions and affections reported as such to a supra-human object.

From this new point of view and with such a transposition, the simultaneous attribution to the heart of intelligence and of love is much

4 We wish to allude more particularly to the traditions proper to the Orders of chivalry, whose principal basis was the Gospel of Saint John: "God is Love," says Saint John (the analogical transposition is evident here), and the battle-cry of the Templars was "Vive Dieu Saint Amour." We find a very clear echo of the doctrines in question in works such as those of Dante.

better justified and takes on a much more profound signification than from the ordinary point of view, for there is then, between this intelligence and this love, a sort of complementarism, as if what is thus designated represented fundamentally only two aspects of a single principle; this will be better understood, we think, by referring to the symbolism of fire. This symbolism is all the more natural and fits all the better when it is a matter of the heart, because the latter, as "vital center," is properly the seat of "animating heat"; it is by warming the body that it vivifies it, as the sun does with regard to our world. Aristotle assimilates organic life to heat, and he is in agreement in this with all Eastern doctrines; Descartes himself places in the heart a "fire without light," but which for him is only the principle of an exclusively "mechanistic" physiological theory like all his physics, which, of course, corresponds in no way to the point of view of the ancients.

Fire, according to all the ancient traditions concerning the elements, is polarized into two complementary aspects which are light and heat; and even from the simple physical point of view, this way of envisaging it is perfectly justified: these two fundamental qualities are, as it were, in their manifestation, in inverse ratio to one another, and thus a flame is all the hotter as it is less illuminating. But fire in itself, the igneous principle in its complete nature, is at once light and heat, since it has the possibility of manifesting itself equally under one and the other of these two aspects; it is in this way that one must consider the fire that resides in the heart, when the latter is taken symbolically as the center of the total being; and we again find here an analogy with the sun, which not only warms but also at the same time illuminates the world. Now light is everywhere and always the symbol of intelligence and knowledge; as for heat, it represents no less naturally love. Even in the human order, one commonly speaks of the warmth of feeling or affection, and this is one of the indications of the connection one spontaneously establishes between life and affectivity[5]; when one carries out a transposition starting from this latter, the symbol of heat will continue to be

5 One could object that the beginning of the Gospel of Saint John indicates in some way an identification between life and light, and not heat; but the term "life" there does not designate organic life; it is transposed there so as to apply to the Word envisaged as principle of universal life, and the Word is indeed "Light," since it is Intelligence.

analogically applicable. Moreover, one must remark this well: just as light and heat, in the physical manifestation of fire, separate from one another, feeling is truly only a heat without light (and that is why the ancients represented love as blind); one can also find in man a light without heat, that of reason, which is only a reflected light, cold like the lunar light that symbolizes it. In the order of principles, on the contrary, the two aspects come together and unite indissolubly, since they are constitutive of a single essential nature; the fire that is at the center of the being is thus indeed at once light and heat, that is to say intelligence and love; but the love in question then differs as much from the feeling that is given the same name as pure intelligence differs from reason[6].

One can now understand that the divine Word, which is the "Heart of the World," is at once Intelligence and Love; but if the Sacred Heart were not Intelligence as well as Love, if it were not even Intelligence above all, it would not truly be the Word. Moreover, if Intelligence were not really attributed to the Heart of Christ, we do not see in what sense it would be possible to interpret this invocation of the litanies: "Cor Jesu, in quo sunt omnes thesauri sapientiæ et scientiæ absconditi," to which we allow ourselves to draw especially the attention of all those who want to see in the Sacred Heart only the object of a simple sentimental devotion.

What is very remarkable is that the two aspects of which we have just spoken each have their very clear representation in the iconography of the Sacred Heart, under the respective forms of the Radiant Heart and of the Enflamed Heart. The radiance figures the light, that is to say Intelligence (and that is, let us say in passing, what for us gives to the title of the Society of the Intellectual Radiance of the Sacred Heart its

6 Knowing that, among the readers of Regnabit, there are some who are acquainted with the theories of a school whose works, though very interesting and very estimable in many respects, nevertheless call for certain reservations, we must say here that we cannot accept the use of the terms Aor and Agni to designate the two complementary aspects of fire of which there has just been question. Indeed, the first of these two words is Hebrew, whereas the second is Sanskrit, and one cannot thus associate terms borrowed from different traditions, whatever the real concordances that exist between them, and even the fundamental identity that is hidden beneath the diversity of their forms; one must not confuse "syncretism" with true synthesis. Moreover, if Aor is indeed exclusively light, Agni is the igneous principle envisaged integrally (the Latin ignis is moreover exactly the same word), thus at once as light and as heat; the restriction of this term to the designation of the second aspect is entirely arbitrary and unjustified.

whole meaning). Likewise, the flames figure the heat, that is to say Love; it is moreover known that love, even in the ordinary and human sense, has frequently been represented by the emblem of an enflamed heart. The existence of these two kinds of representations, for the Sacred Heart, is therefore perfectly justified: one will make use of the one or the other, not indifferently, but according to whether one wishes to place specially in relief the aspect of Intelligence or that of Love.

What it is fitting to note also is that the type of the Radiant Heart is that to which belong the oldest known figurations of the Sacred Heart, from the Heart of Chinon to that of Saint-Denis d'Orques[7]. By contrast, in recent representations (we mean by that those that do not go back beyond the seventeenth century), it is the Enflamed Heart that one encounters in a constant and almost exclusive manner. This fact seems to us very significant: is it not an indication of the forgetfulness into which one of the aspects of the symbolism of the Heart has fallen, and precisely that very one to which previous epochs, on the contrary, gave predominant importance? One must still count oneself fortunate when this forgetfulness has not been accompanied by that of the higher sense of Love, resulting in the "sentimentalist" conception, which is no longer only a weakening, but indeed a true deviation, too common nowadays. To react against this unfortunate tendency, what is best to do, we think, is to explain as completely as possible the ancient symbolism of the Heart, to restore to it the fullness of its signification (or rather of its multiple significations, but harmoniously concordant), and to bring back into honor the figure of the Radiant Heart, which appears to us as the image of a radiant sun, source and hearth of intelligible Light, of pure and eternal Truth. The sun, moreover, is it not also one of the symbols of Christ (Sol Justitiæ), and one of those that have the closest relations with the Sacred Heart?

7 We ask readers to refer, on this subject, to the very important studies that M. Charbonneau-Lassay devoted, in Regnabit, to the old iconography of the Sacred Heart, and to the reproductions that accompany them.

HEART AND BRAIN

We recently read, in the review Vers l'Unité (July–August and September–October 1926), under the signature of Madame Th. Darel, a study in which there are certain considerations fairly close, in some respects, to those which we, for our part, have had occasion to set forth here. Perhaps there would be reservations to make about certain expressions, which do not appear to us to have all the precision one could wish; but we nonetheless believe it interesting to reproduce for the readers of Regnabit various passages from this study.

" … If there is an essential movement, it is that which made man a vertical being, with voluntary stability, a being whose impulses of ideal, whose prayers, whose highest and purest sentiments rise like incense toward Heaven. Of this being, the Supreme Being made a temple within the Temple, and for that endowed him with a heart, that is to say with an immutable point of support, a center of movement rendering man adequate to his origins, similar to his First Cause. At the same time, it is true, man was provided with a brain; but this brain, whose innervation is proper to the entire animal kingdom, finds itself, de facto, subject to an order of secondary movement (in relation to the initial movement). The brain, instrument of thought enclosed within the world and transformer, for the use of man and the world, of this latent Thought, thus makes it realizable through its intermediary. But the heart alone, by a secret inspiration and expiration, permits man, while remaining united to his God, to be living Thought. Thus, thanks to this royal pulsation, man preserves his parcel of divinity and works under the aegis of his Creator, concerned with His Law, happy with a happiness that belongs to him alone to wrest from himself, by turning away from the secret path that leads from his heart to the universal Heart, to the divine Heart… Fallen back to the level of animality, however much he may have the right to call it superior, man has no longer to make use except of the brain and its appendages. In doing so, he lives only by his transformative possibilities; he lives by the latent Thought spread out in the world; but it is no longer in his power to be living Thought. Yet the Religions, the

Saints, the very monuments raised under the sign of a vanished spiritual ordination, speak to man of his origin and of the privileges attached to it. If he so much as wills it, his attention, carried exclusively toward the needs inherent in his relative state, can exercise itself to reestablish in him equilibrium, to recover happiness… The excess of his wanderings brings man to recognize their vanity. Out of breath, here he is who, by an instinctive movement, folds back upon himself, takes refuge in his own heart, and, timidly, tries to descend into his silent crypt. There, the vain noises of the world fall silent. If any remain, it is because the mute depth is not yet reached, because the august threshold is not yet crossed… The world and man are one. And the Heart of man, the Heart of the world are one single Heart."

Those who have become acquainted with our preceding articles will easily find there the idea of the heart as center of the being, an idea which, as we have explained (and we shall return to it again), is common to all ancient traditions, issuing from that primordial Tradition whose vestiges are still encountered everywhere by whoever knows how to see them. They will also find there the idea of the fall casting man far from his original center, and interrupting for him direct communication with the "Heart of the World," such as it was established in a normal and permanent way in the Edenic state[1]. They will finally find there, as regards the central role of the heart, the indication of the double centripetal and centrifugal movement, comparable to the two phases of respiration[2]; it is true that, in the passage we are now going to cite, the duality of these movements is related to that of heart and brain, which seems at first sight to introduce some confusion, although this can also be maintained when one places oneself at a slightly different point of view, where heart and brain are envisaged as constituting in some way two poles in the human being.

" In man, the centrifugal force has for its organ the Brain, the centripetal force, the Heart. The Heart, seat and conserver of the initial movement, is represented in the bodily organism by the movement of diastole and

1 See The Sacred Heart and the Legend of the Holy Grail, August–September 1925
2 See See The Idea of the Center in Ancient Traditions, May 1926, p. 485

systole which continually brings back to its propeller the blood that generates physical life and drives it out to irrigate the field of its action. But the Heart is something else still. Like the Sun which, while spreading the effluences of life, keeps the secret of its mystical royalty, the Heart assumes subtle functions not discernible for whoever has not bent over deep life and has not concentrated his attention on the inner kingdom of which it is the Tabernacle… The Heart is, in our view, the seat and the conserver of cosmic life. Religions knew it, which made of the Heart the sacred symbol, and the builders of cathedrals who erected the holy place at the heart of the Temple. They knew it also, those who, in the most ancient traditions, in the most secret rites, abstracted from discursive intelligence, imposed silence upon their brain in order to enter into the Sanctuary and there raise themselves beyond their relative being up to the Being of being. This parallelism of the Temple and of the Heart brings us back to the double mode of movement which, on the one hand (vertical mode), raises man beyond himself and disengages him from the process proper to manifestation, and, on the other hand (horizontal or circular mode), makes him participate in this whole manifestation."

The comparison of the Heart and the Temple, to which allusion is here made, we have found more particularly in Hebrew Kabbalah[3], and, as we indicated previously, one can connect to it the expressions of certain theologians of the Middle Ages assimilating the Heart of Christ to the Tabernacle or to the Ark of the Covenant[4]. On the other hand, as regards the consideration of vertical and horizontal movement, it relates to an aspect of the symbolism of the cross, especially developed in certain schools of Muslim esoterism, and of which we shall perhaps speak one day; it is indeed of this symbolism that there is question in the continuation of the same study, and we shall extract from it a final citation, whose beginning may be compared with what we have said, concerning the symbols of the center, about the cross in the circle and about the swastika[5].

3 The Heart of the World in Hebrew Kabbalah, July–August 1926; The Holy Land and the Heart of the World, September–October 1926

4 On Corporate Signs and Their Original Meaning, February 1926, p. 220

5 The Idea of the Center in Ancient Traditions, May 1926

“ The Cross is the cosmic sign par excellence. As far back as it is possible to go in time, the Cross represents what unites, in their double signification, the vertical and the horizontal; it makes the movement proper to them participate in a single center, in one same generative act… How not to accord a metaphysical sense to a sign capable of responding so completely to the nature of things? In having become the almost exclusive symbol of the divine crucifixion, the Cross has only accentuated its sacred signification. Indeed, if from the origins this sign was representative of the relations of the world and of man with God, it became impossible not to identify Redemption with the Cross, not to nail upon the Cross the Man whose Heart is to the highest degree representative of the divine in a world forgetful of this mystery. If we were doing exegesis here, it would be easy to show to what point the Gospels and their deep symbolism are significant in this regard. Christ is more than a fact, than the great Fact of two thousand years ago. His figure is of all centuries. It rises up from the tomb where relative man descends, in order to rise again incorruptible in the divine Man, in the Man redeemed by the universal Heart that beats at the heart of Man, and whose blood is poured out for the salvation of man and of the world.”

The last remark, though expressed in somewhat obscure terms, accords in essence with what we have said of the symbolic value that historical facts have, beyond their own reality (and, of course, without that reality being affected in any way), and above all the facts of sacred history[6]; but it is not on these considerations that we propose to insist at present. What we want is to return, taking advantage of the occasion thus provided, to the question of the relations of the heart and the brain, or of the faculties represented by these two organs; we have already given some indications on this subject[7], but we believe it will not be useless to add new developments to it.

We saw a moment ago that one may, in a sense, consider heart and brain as two poles, that is to say as two complementary elements; this point of

6 The Trees of Paradise, March 1926, p. 295

7 The Radiant Heart and the Enflamed Heart, April 1926

view of complementarism corresponds indeed to a reality in a certain order, at a certain level, if one may say so; it is even less external and less superficial than the point of view of pure and simple opposition, which nevertheless also contains a part of truth, but only when one confines oneself to the most immediate appearances. With the consideration of complementarism, opposition is already conciliated and resolved, at least up to a certain point, its two terms balancing one another, as it were. However, this point of view is still insufficient, in that it nevertheless leaves a duality subsisting: to say that there are in man two poles or two centers, between which there can moreover be antagonism or harmony according to the cases, that is true when one envisages him in a certain state; but is that not a state that one could call "decentered" or "disunited," and which, as such, properly characterizes only fallen man, thus separated from his original center as we recalled above? It is at the very moment of the fall that Adam becomes "knowing good and evil" (Genesis, III, 22), that is to say begins to consider all things under the aspect of duality; the dual nature of the "Tree of Knowledge" appears to him when he finds himself cast out of the place of the first unity, to which corresponds the "Tree of Life"[8].

Be that as it may, what is certain is that, if duality indeed exists in the being, it can only be from a contingent and relative point of view; if one places oneself at another point of view, deeper and more essential, or if one envisages the being in the state that corresponds to it, the unity of that being must be reestablished[9]. Then, the relation between the two elements that had first appeared as opposed, then as complementary, becomes different: it is a relation no longer of correlation or coordination, but of subordination. The two terms of this relation, indeed, can no longer be placed on the same plane, as if there were between them a sort of equivalence; one depends on the other as having in it its principle; and such is indeed the case for what are represented respectively by the brain and the heart.

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8 See The Trees of Paradise, March 1926. – From certain comparisons that can be established between biblical and apocalyptic symbolism and Hindu symbolism, it results very clearly that the essence of the "Tree of Life" is properly the "Indivisible" (in Sanskrit Aditi); but this would take us too far from our subject.

9 One may recall here the scholastic adage: "Esse et unum convertuntur."

To make this understood, we shall return to the symbolism that we have already indicated[10], according to which the heart is assimilated to the sun and the brain to the moon. Now the sun and the moon, or rather the cosmic principles that are represented by these two heavenly bodies, are often figured as complementary, and they are indeed so from a certain point of view; one then establishes between them a sort of parallelism or symmetry, of which it would be easy to find examples in all traditions. Thus hermeticism makes of the sun and the moon (or of their alchemical equivalents, gold and silver) the image of the two active and passive principles, or masculine and feminine according to another mode of expression, which are indeed the two terms of a true complementarism[11]. Moreover, if one considers the appearances of our world, as it is legitimate to do, the sun and the moon do in fact have comparable and symmetrical roles, being, according to the biblical expression, "the two great lights, one presiding over the day and the other over the night" (Genesis, I, 16); and certain Far Eastern languages (Chinese, Annamite, Malay) designate them by terms that are likewise symmetrical, meaning "eye of day" and "eye of night." Yet, if one goes beyond appearances, it is no longer possible to maintain this sort of equivalence, since the sun is by itself a source of light, whereas the moon only reflects the light it receives from the sun[12]. Lunar light is in reality only a reflection of solar light; one could therefore say that the moon, insofar as it is a "light," exists only through the sun.

What is true for the sun and the moon is also true for the heart and the brain, or, to speak more exactly, for the faculties to which these two organs correspond and which are symbolized by them, that is to say intuitive intelligence and discursive or rational intelligence. The brain,

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10 The Radiant Heart and the Enflamed Heart, April 1926, p. 384

11 It must moreover be remarked that, under a certain respect, each of the two terms can in its turn be polarized into active and passive, whence the figurations of the sun and the moon as androgynes; thus Janus, under one of his aspects, is Lunus-Luna, as we noted previously (On Certain Hermetico-Religious Symbols, December 1925, p. 24) [cf. here chapter 3, p. 28]. One can understand by analogous considerations that centrifugal force and centripetal force are, from one point of view, related respectively to brain and heart, and that, from another point of view, they are both related to the heart, as corresponding to two complementary phases of its central function.

12 This could be generalized: "receptivity" characterizes everywhere and always the passive principle, so that there is not a true equivalence between this and the active principle, although, in a sense, they are necessary to one another, being one active and the other passive only in their very relation.

insofar as it is the organ or instrument of the latter, truly plays only a role of "transmitter" and, if one wishes, "transformer"; and it is not without motive that the word "reflection" is applied to rational thought, by which things are seen only as in a mirror, quasi per speculum, as Saint Paul says. It is not without motive either that one same root man or men has served, in diverse languages, to form numerous words which designate on the one hand the moon (Greek mênê, English moon, German mond)[13], and on the other hand the rational faculty or the "mental" (Sanskrit manas, Latin mens, English mind)[14], and also, consequently, man considered more especially in the rational nature by which he is defined specifically (Sanskrit mânava, English man, German mann and mensch)[15]. Reason, indeed, which is only a faculty of mediate knowledge, is the properly human mode of intelligence; intellectual intuition can be said to be supra-human, since it is a direct participation in universal Intelligence, which, residing in the heart, that is to say at the very center of the being, where is its point of contact with the Divine, penetrates that being from within and illuminates it with its radiance[16].

Light is the most habitual symbol of knowledge; it is therefore natural to represent by solar light direct knowledge, that is to say intuitive, which is that of the pure intellect, and by lunar light reflected knowledge, that is to say discursive, which is that of reason. Just as the moon can give its light only if it is itself illuminated by the sun, so reason can function validly, in the order of reality that is its proper domain, only under the guarantee of principles that illuminate and direct it, and that it receives from the higher intellect. There is on this point an equivocation that it is

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13 Hence also the name of the month (Latin mensis, English month, German monat), which is properly the "lunation." – To the same root are also connected the idea of measure (Latin mensura) and that of division or sharing, but this again would carry us too far.

14 Memory is also designated by similar words (Greek mnêsis, mnêmosunê); it is indeed, it too, only a "reflecting" faculty, and the moon, in a certain aspect of its symbolism, is considered as representing "cosmic memory."

15 Hence also comes the name of Minerva (or Menerva) among the Etruscans and the Latins; it is to be remarked that the Athêna of the Greeks who is assimilated to her is said to have issued from the brain of Zeus, and that she has as emblem the owl, which, by its character as a nocturnal bird, again relates to lunar symbolism; in this respect, the owl is opposed to the eagle, which, being able to look at the sun full face, often represents intuitive intelligence, or direct contemplation of intelligible Light.

16 See The Radiant Heart and the Enflamed Heart, April 1926, p. 384; The Holy Land and the Heart of the World, September–October 1926, p. 213

important to dissipate: modern philosophers[17] are strangely mistaken when they speak as they do of "rational principles," as if these principles belonged properly to reason, as if they were in some way its work, whereas, in order to govern it, it is on the contrary necessary that they impose themselves upon it, thus that they come from higher up; there is an example of the rationalist error, and one can thereby realize the essential difference that exists between rationalism and true intellectualism. It suffices to reflect for an instant to understand that a principle, in the true sense of this word, by the very fact that it cannot be drawn or deduced from anything else, can be grasped only immediately, thus intuitively, and cannot be the object of a discursive knowledge like that which characterizes reason; to use here scholastic terminology, it is the pure intellect that is habitus principiorum, whereas reason is only habitus conclusionum.

Another consequence further results from the fundamental characters of the intellect and of reason: an intuitive knowledge, because it is immediate, is necessarily infallible in itself[18]; by contrast, error can always enter into any knowledge that is only indirect or mediate as rational knowledge is; and one sees thereby how wrong Descartes was in wanting to attribute infallibility to reason. This is what Aristotle expresses in these terms[19]: "Among the possessions of intelligence[20], by virtue of which we attain truth, there are some which are always true, and others which can fall into error. Reasoning is in this latter case; but intellect is always in conformity with truth, and nothing is more true than intellect. Now, principles being more evident than demonstration, and every science being accompanied by reasoning, the knowledge of

17 Let us specify that by this expression we mean those who represent the modern mentality, such as we have often had occasion to define it (see in particular our communication published in the June 1926 issue, pp. 6–11) [cf. here chapter 9]; the very point of view of modern philosophy and its special way of posing questions are incompatible with true metaphysics.

18 Saint Thomas notes however (I, q. 58, a. 5, and q. 85, a. 6) that the intellect can err in the simple perception of its proper object; but this error occurs only per accidens, because of an affirmation of a discursive order that has intervened; it is therefore no longer, strictly speaking, pure intellect that is in question in this case. It is moreover understood that infallibility applies only to the very grasp of intuitive truths, and not to their formulation or their translation into discursive mode.

19 Posterior Analytics.

20 One ordinarily renders by "possession" the Greek word exis, which is almost untranslatable in French and corresponds more exactly to the Latin habitus, signifying at once nature, disposition, state, manner of being.

principles is not a science (but it is a mode of knowledge superior to scientific or rational knowledge, and which properly constitutes metaphysical knowledge). Moreover, intellect alone is more true than science (or than the reason that builds science); therefore principles belong to intellect." And, to affirm better the intuitive character of this intellect, Aristotle also says: "Principles are not demonstrated, but their truth is directly perceived"[21].

This direct perception of truth, this supra-rational intellectual intuition of which moderns seem to have lost even the mere notion, is truly the "knowledge of the heart," according to an expression that is frequently encountered in Eastern doctrines. This knowledge is moreover, in itself, something incommunicable; one must have "realized" it, at least to a certain extent, in order to know what it truly is; and all that can be said of it gives only a more or less approximate idea, always inadequate. Above all, it would be an error to believe that one can effectively understand what the kind of knowledge in question is when one contents oneself with envisaging it "philosophically," that is to say from outside, for one must never forget that philosophy is only a purely human or rational knowledge, as all "profane knowledge" is. On the contrary, it is upon supra-rational knowledge that "sacred science" is essentially founded, in the sense in which we employed this expression in concluding our last article; and all that we have said about the use of symbolism and of the teaching contained therein relates to the means that traditional doctrines place at man's disposal to allow him to arrive at this knowledge par excellence, of which every other knowledge, insofar as it too has some reality, is only a participation more or less remote, a reflection more or less indirect, just as the light of the moon is only a pale reflection of that of the sun. The "knowledge of the heart" is the direct perception of intelligible Light, of that Light of the Word of which Saint John speaks at the beginning of his Gospel, Light radiating from the "spiritual Sun" which is the true "Heart of the World."

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21 Let us also recall these definitions of Saint Thomas Aquinas: "Ratio discursum quemdam designat, quo ex uno in aliud cognoscendum anima humana pervenit; intellectus vero simplicem et absolutam cognitionem (sine aliquo motu vel discursu, statim in prima et subita acceptione) designare videtur" (De Veritate, q. XV, a. 1).

CHRIST PRIEST AND KING

Among the many symbols that have been applied to Christ, and of which many are connected with the most ancient traditions, there are some that represent above all spiritual authority in all its aspects, but there are also some which, in their customary use, more or less allude to temporal power. Thus, for example, one frequently finds placed in the hand of Christ the "Globe of the World," an insignia of the Empire, that is to say of universal Kingship. It is that, in the person of Christ, the two functions—priestly and royal—to which spiritual authority and temporal power are attached respectively, are truly inseparable from one another; both belong to him eminently and par excellence, as to the common principle from which both proceed, in all their manifestations.

Doubtless, it may seem that, in a general way, the priestly function of Christ has been brought more particularly into relief; that is understandable, for the spiritual is superior to the temporal, and the same hierarchical relation must be observed between the functions that correspond to them respectively. Kingship is truly "of divine right" only insofar as it recognizes its subordination with respect to spiritual authority, which alone can confer upon it the investiture and the consecration that give it its full and entire legitimacy. Nevertheless, from a certain point of view, one can also envisage the priestly and royal functions as being, in a way, complementary to one another, and then, although the second, in truth, has its immediate principle in the first, there is nevertheless between them, when they are envisaged in this way as separated, a sort of parallelism. In other words, as soon as the priest, habitually, is not king at the same time, it is necessary that priest and king draw their powers from a common source; the hierarchical difference that exists between them consists in this, that the priest receives his power directly from this source, whereas the king, by reason of the more exterior and properly terrestrial character of his function, can receive his only through the intermediary of the priest. The latter, indeed, truly plays the role of "mediator" between Heaven and Earth; and it is not without reason that the fullness of the priesthood has

received the symbolic name of "pontificate," for, as Saint Bernard says, "the Pontiff, as the etymology of his name indicates, is a sort of bridge between God and man"[1]. If, then, one wishes to go back to the first origin of the powers of the priest and of the king, it is only in the celestial world that one can find it; this primordial source from which every legitimate authority proceeds, this Principle in which reside at once the supreme Priesthood and the supreme Kingship, can only be the divine Word.

Therefore Christ, manifestation of the Word in this world, must truly be priest and king together; but, a thing that may seem strange at first sight, his human lineage seems to designate him at the outset for the royal function and not for the priestly function. He is called the "Lion of the tribe of Judah"; the lion, a solar and royal animal, emblem of this tribe, more especially of the family of David which is his, thus becomes his personal emblem. If the priesthood has preeminence over kingship, how is it that Christ issues from this royal tribe of Judah and this family of David and not from the priestly tribe of Levi and the family of Aaron? There is there a mystery of which Saint Paul gives us the explanation in these terms: "If the priesthood of Levi, under which the people received the law, had been able to make men just and perfect, what need would there have been that another priest should arise who was called priest according to the order of Melchizedek, and not according to the order of Aaron? Now the priesthood being changed, it is necessary that the law also be changed. For he of whom these things are foretold is of another tribe, of which no one has ever served at the altar, since it is certain that our Lord came forth from Judah, a tribe to which Moses never attributed the priesthood. And this appears still more clearly in that there arises another priest according to the order of Melchizedek, who is not established by the law of an ordinance and of a carnal succession, but by the power of his immortal life, as Scripture declares by these words: Thou art a priest eternally according to the order of Melchizedek"[2].

Thus Christ is priest, but by purely spiritual right; he is so according to

1 Tractacus de Moribus et Officio episcoporum, III, 9.
2 Epistle to the Hebrews, VII, 11–17.

the order of Melchizedek, and not according to the order of Aaron, nor by the fact of "carnal succession"; by virtue of the latter, it is kingship that belongs to him, and that is indeed in conformity with the nature of things. But moreover the priesthood according to the order of Melchizedek also implies in itself kingship; it is here, precisely, that the one and the other cannot be separated, since Melchizedek is, he too, priest and king at once, and thus he is truly the figure of the Principle in which the two powers are united, just as the sacrifice that he offers with bread and wine is the very figure of the Eucharist. It is by reason of this double prefiguration that the word of the Psalms applies to Christ: "Tu es sacerdos in aeternum secundum ordinem Melchissedec"[3].

Let us recall the text of the biblical passage in which the meeting of Melchizedek with Abraham is related: "And Melchizedek, king of Salem, had bread and wine brought forth; and he was priest of the Most High God. And he blessed Abram[4], saying: Blessed be Abram of the Most High God, possessor of Heaven and Earth; and blessed be the Most High God, who has delivered thine enemies into thy hands. And Abram gave him the tithe of all that he had taken"[5]. And here is how Saint Paul comments on this text: "This Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, who went out to meet Abraham when he was returning from the defeat of the kings, who blessed him, and to whom Abraham gave the tithe of all the spoil; who is first, according to the meaning of his name, king of Justice[6], then king of Salem; that is to say king of Peace; who is without father, without mother, without genealogy, who has neither beginning nor end of his life, but who is made thus like unto the Son of God; this Melchizedek remains priest in perpetuity"[7].

Now Melchizedek is represented as superior to Abraham since he blesses him, and "without contradiction, it is the inferior who is blessed by the superior"[8]; and for his part, Abraham recognizes this superiority,

3 Psalm CIX, 4.
4 It was only later that the name Abram was changed to Abraham (Genesis, XVII).
5 Genesis, XIV, 18–20.
6 This is indeed what Melki-Tsedeq literally means in Hebrew.
7 Epistle to the Hebrews, VII, 1–3.
8 Ibid., VII, 7.

since he gives him the tithe, which is the mark of his dependence. It follows that the priesthood according to the order of Melchizedek is superior to the priesthood according to the order of Aaron, since it is from Abraham that the tribe of Levi issued and consequently the family of Aaron.

That is what Saint Paul further affirms: “Here (in the Levitical priesthood), it is mortal men who receive tithes; but there it is a man of whom it is attested that he is living. And Levi himself who receives the tithe (from the people of Israel) paid it, so to speak, in the person of Abraham, since he was still in Abraham his forefather when Melchizedek went out to meet this patriarch”[9]. And this superiority corresponds to that of the New Covenant over the Old Law: “Inasmuch as it is certain that this priesthood was not established without an oath, for whereas the other priests were established without an oath, this one was established with an oath, God having said to him: The Lord has sworn, and his oath shall remain immutable, that thou shalt be priest eternally according to the order of Melchizedek; inasmuch is it true that the covenant of which Jesus is the mediator and the guarantor is more perfect than the first”[10].

We have wished to recall here these essential texts, without pretending moreover to develop all the meanings contained in them, which would carry us very far, for there are truths of a very deep order there, and which do not allow themselves to be penetrated immediately, as Saint Paul takes care to warn us himself: “We have in this matter many things to say, and things difficult to explain, because you have become slow to understand”[11]. What would he say today, when things of this sort have become entirely foreign to the immense majority of men, whose mind has turned exclusively toward the sole realities of the material world, ignoring deliberately everything that surpasses this narrowly limited domain?

What we have wished to show above all is that the order of Melchizedek

9 Ibid., VII, 8–10.
10 Ibid., VII, 20–22.
11 Ibid., V, 11.

is at once priestly and royal and that consequently, the application to Christ of the words of Scripture that relate to it constitutes the express affirmation of this double character. It is also that the union of the two powers in one and the same person represents a principle superior to the one and to the other of the orders in which these two same powers are exercised respectively when they are considered separately; and that is why Melchizedek is truly, by all that is said of him, "made like unto the Son of God"[12]. But Christ, being himself the Son of God, is not only the representation of this principle of the two powers; he is that principle itself in all its transcendent reality, "by the power of his immortal life"; every authority has its source in him because he is the eternal Word "by whom all things were made," as Saint John declares at the beginning of his Gospel, and that "nothing of what has been made was made without him."

To these fundamental points of view, we shall add only a few complementary observations; and first of all, it is important to note that Justice and Peace, which are, as has been seen, the attributes of Melchizedek, according to the meaning of his very name and of the title given to him, are also attributes that eminently befit Christ, who is called notably "Sun of Justice" and "Prince of Peace." It must also be said that these ideas of Justice and Peace have, in Christianity as in the ancient traditions and especially in the Judaic tradition, where they are frequently associated, a sense very different from their profane sense and that would require an in-depth study[13].

Another remark, which may seem singular to those who do not know the genius of the Hebrew language, but which is no less important, is this: Melchizedek is priest of the Most High God, El Elion; El Elion is the equivalent of Emmanuel, these two names having exactly the same number[14]. This equivalence indicates that it is a matter of two

12 The union of the two powers could even, by reason of their respective relations with the divine and human orders, be regarded in a certain sense as prefiguring the union of the two natures, divine and human, in the person of Christ.

13 This difference is affirmed clearly by certain Gospel texts, for example this one: "I leave you peace, I give you my peace; I do not give it to you as the world gives" (Saint John, XIV, 27).

14 In Hebrew, each letter of the alphabet has a numerical value; and the numerical value of a name is the sum of those of the letters of which it is formed; thus the number of the two names El Elion and Emmanuel is

designations of the same divine principle, envisaged only under two different relations: in the celestial world it is El Elion; as for its manifestation in the terrestrial world it is Emmanuel ("God with us" or "God in us"). There results the following consequence: the priesthood of Melchizedek is the priesthood of El Elion; the Christian priesthood, which is a participation in the very priesthood of Christ, is that of Emmanuel; if then El Elion and Emmanuel are but one and the same principle, these two priesthoods too are but one, and the Christian priesthood, which moreover essentially includes the Eucharistic offering under the species of bread and wine, is truly "according to the order of Melchizedek."

Finally, Melchizedek is not the only person who, in Scripture, appears with the double character of priest and king; in the New Testament, indeed, we also find the union of these two functions in the Magi-Kings, which can give one to think that there is a very direct link between these and Melchizedek, or, in other words, that it is a matter in both cases of representatives of one and the same authority. Now the Magi-Kings, by the homage they render to Christ and by the gifts they offer him, expressly recognize in him the source of this authority in all the domains in which it is exercised: the first offers him gold and hails him as king; the second offers him incense and hails him as priest; finally the third offers him myrrh or the balm of incorruptibility[15] and hails him as prophet or spiritual master par excellence, which corresponds directly to the common principle of the two powers, priestly and royal. Homage is thus rendered to Christ, from his human birth, in the "three worlds" of which all Eastern doctrines speak: the terrestrial world, the intermediate world, and the celestial world; and those who render it to him are none other than the authentic depositaries of the primordial Tradition, the guardians of the deposit of the Revelation made to humanity from the time of the earthly Paradise. Such is at least the conclusion that, for us, emerges very clearly from the comparison of the concordant testimonies

15 Trees with gums or incorruptible resins play an important role in symbolism, with the sense of resurrection and immortality; in particular, they have sometimes been taken, in this respect, as emblems of Christ. It is true that one has also given to myrrh another signification, relating exclusively to the humanity of Christ; but we think that it is a wholly modern interpretation, whose value from the traditional point of view is fairly contestable.

that one encounters in this regard among all peoples; and besides, under the diverse forms with which it clothed itself in the course of time, under the more or less thick veils that sometimes concealed it from the gaze of those who hold only to outward appearances, this great primordial Tradition was always in reality the един truly Religion of all humanity. Should not the approach of the representatives of this Tradition, as the Gospel reports it to us, if one understood well what is in question, be regarded as one of the most beautiful proofs of the divinity of Christ, at the same time as the decisive recognition of the supreme Priesthood and Kingship that truly belong to him “according to the order of Melchizedek”?

CHRISTIANITY AND INITIATION

We had no intention of returning here to the questions concerning the proper character of Christianity, for we thought that what we had said about it on various occasions, even if more or less incidentally, was at least sufficient for there to be no equivocation in this regard[1]. Unfortunately, in recent times we have had to note that this was not so, and that, on the contrary, rather unfortunate confusions have arisen on this subject in the minds of a fairly large number of our readers, which has shown us the necessity of again giving some clarifications on certain points. Moreover, it is only with regret that we decide to do so, for we must confess that we have never felt any inclination to treat this subject especially, for several different reasons, the first of which is the almost impenetrable obscurity that surrounds everything relating to the origins and earliest times of Christianity, an obscurity such that, upon reflection, it seems unable to be simply accidental and to have been expressly willed; this remark is moreover to be kept in mind in connection with what we shall say subsequently.

In spite of all the difficulties that result from such a state of affairs, there is nevertheless at least one point that does not seem doubtful, and that moreover has not been contested by any of those who have shared their observations with us, but on which, on the contrary, some have relied in order to formulate certain of their objections: namely that, far from being only the religion or exoteric tradition that is currently known under this name, Christianity, at its origins, had, both by its rites and by its doctrine, an essentially esoteric character, and consequently an initiatic one. One can find a confirmation of this in the fact that the Islamic tradition considers primitive Christianity as having properly

1 We could not help some astonishment on seeing that some have found that the Aperçus sur l'Initiation touched more and more directly upon Christianity than our other works; we can assure them that, there as elsewhere, we intended to speak of it only to the extent that this was strictly necessary for the understanding of our exposition, and, if one may say so, as a function of the different questions that we had to treat in the course of it. What is hardly less astonishing is that readers who nevertheless claim to have followed attentively and constantly everything we have written have believed they found in this book something new in this regard, whereas, on all the points they have indicated to us, we have on the contrary only to reproduce purely and simply considerations that we have already developed in some of our articles previously published in Le Voile d'Isis and Études Traditionnelles.

been a tarîqah, that is to say, in sum, an initiatic way, and not a shariyah or a legislation of a social order and addressed to all; and this is so true that later it had to be supplemented by the constitution of a "canonical" law[2] which was in reality only an adaptation of ancient Roman law, thus something that came entirely from outside, and not at all a development of what was contained at the outset in Christianity itself. It is moreover evident that one finds in the Gospel no prescription that could be regarded as having a truly legal character in the proper sense of this word; the well-known saying: "Render unto Caesar what is Caesar's...," seems to us particularly significant in this regard, for it formally implies, for everything that is of an exterior order, acceptance of a legislation completely foreign to the Christian tradition, and which is simply that which in fact existed in the milieu in which the latter arose, by the very fact that it was then incorporated into the Roman Empire. This would assuredly be one of the gravest lacunae if Christianity had then been what it later became; the very existence of such a lacuna would be not only inexplicable, but truly inconceivable for an orthodox and regular tradition, if this tradition really had to include an exoterism as well as an esoterism, and if it even had, one might say, to apply above all to the exoteric domain; on the other hand, if Christianity had the character we have just stated, the matter is explained without difficulty, for it is not at all a lacuna, but an intentional abstention from intervening in a domain that, by its very definition, could not concern it under these conditions.

For this to have been possible, the Christian Church in the earliest times must have constituted a closed or reserved organization, in which not all were admitted indiscriminately, but only those who possessed the qualifications necessary to receive initiation validly in the form that one may call "Christic"; and one could no doubt still find many indications showing that it was indeed so, although they are generally not understood in our time, and even, as a result of the modern tendency to deny esoterism, one too often seeks, in a more or less conscious way, to divert them from their true signification[3].

2 In this regard, it may perhaps not be without interest to note that, in Arabic, the word qanûn, derived from Greek, is used to designate any law adopted for purely contingent reasons and not forming an integral part of the shariyah or of traditional legislation.

3 We have often had occasion to note especially this way of proceeding in the current interpretation

This Church was in sum comparable, in this respect, to the Buddhist Sangha, where admission also had the character of a true initiation[4], and which one is accustomed to assimilate to a "monastic order," which is correct at least in the sense that its particular statutes were, no more than those of a monastic order in the Christian sense of this term, made to be extended to the whole of the society within which this organization had been established[5]. The case of Christianity, from this point of view, is therefore not unique among the different known traditional forms, and this observation seems to us of a nature to diminish the astonishment that some might feel at it; it may be more difficult to explain that it then changed character as completely as everything we see around us shows, but this is not yet the moment to examine that other question.

Here now is the objection that has been addressed to us and to which we alluded above: once the Christian rites, and in particular the sacraments, had an initiatic character, how could they ever have been able to lose it in order to become simple exoteric rites? That is impossible and even contradictory, we are told, because the initiatic character is permanent and immutable and can never be effaced, so that one must only admit that, due to circumstances and to the admission of a great majority of unqualified individuals, what was primitively an effective initiation found itself reduced to having no more than the value of a virtual initiation. There is here a misunderstanding that seems to us quite evident: initiation, as we have explained many times, does indeed confer upon those who receive it a character that is acquired once and for all and that is truly indelible; but this notion of the permanence of initiatic character applies to human beings who possess it, and not to rites or to the action of the spiritual influence that these are intended to serve as

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of the Fathers of the Church, and more particularly of the Greek Fathers: one strives, as much as possible, to maintain that it is wrongly that one would wish to see in them esoteric allusions, and, when the matter becomes quite impossible, one does not hesitate to reproach them for it and to declare that there was there on their part a regrettable weakness!

4 See A. K. Coomaraswamy: "Is Buddhist ordination an initiation?", in the July 1939 issue of Études Traditionnelles.

5 It is this illegitimate extension that later gave rise, in Indian Buddhism, to certain deviations such as the negation of castes: the Buddha did not have to take account of these within a closed organization whose members had, in principle at least, to be beyond their distinction; but wishing to suppress this same distinction in the whole social milieu constituted a formal heresy from the point of view of the Hindu tradition.

vehicles for; it is absolutely unjustified to wish to transfer it from one of these two cases to the other, which in reality amounts to attributing to it an entirely different meaning, and we are certain that we have never ourselves said anything that could give rise to such a confusion. In support of this objection, it is argued that the action exercised by the Christian sacraments is referred to the Holy Spirit, which is perfectly correct, but entirely beside the question; moreover, whether the spiritual influence is designated thus in accordance with Christian language, or otherwise according to the terminology proper to this or that tradition, it is equally true that its nature is essentially transcendent and supra-individual, for, if it were not so, one would no longer be dealing at all with a spiritual influence, but with a simple psychic influence; only, that being admitted, what could prevent the same influence, or an influence of the same nature, from acting according to different modalities and in equally different domains, and moreover, because this influence is itself of a transcendent order, would its effects necessarily have to be so as well in all cases?[6] We do not at all see why this would be so, and we are even certain of the contrary; indeed, we have always taken the greatest care to indicate that a spiritual influence intervenes as much in exoteric rites as in initiatic rites, but it goes without saying that the effects it produces could in no way be of the same order in the two cases, otherwise the very distinction of the two corresponding domains would no longer subsist[7]. We do not understand any better in what way it would be inadmissible that the influence that operates by means of the Christian sacraments, after having acted at first in the initiatic order, then, under other conditions and for reasons depending on those very conditions, made its action descend into the simply religious and exoteric domain, such that its effects were henceforth limited to certain possibilities of an exclusively individual order, having as their term "salvation," and that while nevertheless preserving, as to outward appearances, the same ritual supports, because these were of Christic institution and without them there would no longer even have been a

6 We remark incidentally that this would notably have the consequence of forbidding spiritual influences the production of effects concerning simply the corporeal order, such as miraculous healings for example.

7 If the action of the Holy Spirit were exercised only in the esoteric domain, because it is the only truly transcendent one, we would also ask our opponents, who are Catholics, what one would have to think of the doctrine according to which it intervenes in the formulation of the most evidently exoteric dogmas.

properly Christian tradition. That it indeed really was so in fact, and that consequently, in the present state of things and even since a very remote time, one can no longer in any way consider Christian rites as having an initiatic character, is what we shall have to insist on with greater precision; but we must moreover point out that there is a certain impropriety of language in saying that they have "lost" this character, as if this fact were purely accidental, for we think on the contrary that it must have been a matter of an adaptation which, despite the regrettable consequences it necessarily had in certain respects, was fully justified and even necessitated by circumstances of time and place.

If one considers what, at the time in question, the state of the Western world was, that is to say of the whole of the countries that were then included in the Roman Empire, one can easily realize that, if Christianity had not "descended" into the exoteric domain, this world, as a whole, would soon have been deprived of all tradition, those that existed there up to that point, and notably the Greco-Roman tradition which had naturally become predominant there, having arrived at an extreme degeneration that indicated that their cycle of existence was about to come to an end[8]. This "descent," let us insist again, was therefore in no way an accident or a deviation, and one must on the contrary regard it as having had a truly "providential" character, since it prevented the West from falling from that time into a state that would in sum have been comparable to that in which it finds itself currently. The moment when a general loss of tradition such as properly characterizes modern times was to occur had moreover not yet come; there thus had to be a "rectification," and Christianity alone could effect it, but on the condition of renouncing the esoteric and "reserved" character it had at first[9]; and thus the "rectification" was not only beneficial for Western humanity, which is too obvious for there to be any need to insist on it,

8 It is understood that, in speaking of the Western world as a whole, we make exception for an elite which not only still understood its own tradition from the outward point of view, but which, moreover, continued to receive initiation into the mysteries; the tradition could thus have maintained itself still more or less long in an ever more restricted milieu, but that lies outside the question we are considering at present, since it is a matter of the generality of Westerners, and it is for this generality that Christianity had to come to replace the ancient traditional forms at the moment when they were reduced for it to being no more than "superstitions" in the etymological sense of this word.

9 In this respect, one could say that the passage from esoterism to exoterism constituted here a true "sacrifice," which is moreover true of every descent of the spirit.

but it was at the same time, as every "providential" action intervening in the course of history necessarily is, in perfect accord with the cyclical laws themselves.

It would probably be impossible to assign a precise date to this change that made Christianity a religion in the proper sense of the word and a traditional form addressed to all indiscriminately; but what is certain in any case is that it was already an accomplished fact at the time of Constantine and of the Council of Nicaea, so that the latter had only to "sanction" it, so to speak, by inaugurating the era of "dogmatic" formulations intended to constitute a purely exoteric presentation of doctrine[10]. This could not moreover occur without some inevitable inconveniences, for the fact of thus enclosing doctrine in clearly defined and limited formulas made it much more difficult, even for those who were truly capable of it, to penetrate its profound meaning; in addition, truths of a more properly esoteric order, which were by their very nature beyond the reach of the greatest number, could no longer be presented except as "mysteries" in the sense that this word has taken vulgarly, that is to say that, in the eyes of the common run, they were not to take long to appear as something it was impossible to understand, even forbidden to seek to fathom. These inconveniences were nevertheless not such that they could oppose the constitution of Christianity as an exoteric traditional form or prevent its legitimacy, given the immense advantage that, as we have already said, was to result from it for the Western world; moreover, if Christianity as such thereby ceased to be initiatic, there still remained the possibility that there subsisted, within it, a specifically Christian initiation for the elite who could not remain at the sole point of view of exoterism and shut themselves up within the limitations that are inherent in it; but that too is another question that we shall have to examine a little later.

On the other hand, it is to be noted that this change in the essential

10 At the same time, the "conversion" of Constantine implied the recognition, by a sort of official act of imperial authority, of the fact that the Greco-Roman tradition henceforth had to be considered extinguished, although naturally there subsisted still long enough remnants of it that could only go on degenerating more and more before disappearing definitively, and which are what was designated a little later by the contemptuous term "paganism."

character and, one might say, in the very nature of Christianity, perfectly explains that, as we said at the beginning, everything that had preceded it was voluntarily enveloped in obscurity, and that it could even not have been otherwise. It is evident indeed that the nature of original Christianity, insofar as it was essentially esoteric and initiatic, had to remain entirely unknown to those who were now admitted into Christianity become exoteric; consequently, everything that could make known or even merely suggest what Christianity really was at its beginnings had to be covered for them by an impenetrable veil. Naturally, we have not to seek by what means such a result could have been obtained; that would rather be the affair of historians, if it ever occurred to them to pose this question, which would moreover doubtless appear to them as almost insoluble, for lack of being able to apply their habitual methods and rely on "documents" which manifestly could not exist in such a case; but what interests us here is only to note the fact and to understand its true reason. We shall add that, in these conditions, and contrary to what lovers of rational explanations might think, which are always also superficial and "simplistic" explanations, one can in no way attribute this "obscuration" of origins to an ignorance that is too obviously impossible among those who had to be all the more conscious of the transformation of Christianity insofar as they themselves had taken a more or less direct part in it, nor claim either, following a prejudice fairly widespread among moderns who too readily attribute to others their own mentality, that there was on their part a "political" and self-interested maneuver, from which moreover we do not see very well what profit they could actually have drawn; the truth is on the contrary that this was rigorously required by the very nature of things, in order to maintain, in conformity with traditional orthodoxy, the profound distinction between the exoteric and esoteric domains[11].

Some might perhaps ask what became, with such a change, of the

11 We have remarked elsewhere that the confusion between these two domains is one of the causes that most frequently gives rise to heterodox "sects," and there is no doubt that in fact, among the ancient Christian heresies, there are a certain number that had no other origin than that; one understands all the better thereby the precautions that were taken to avoid this confusion as much as possible, and whose effectiveness in this regard cannot in any way be contested, even if, from an entirely different point of view, one is tempted to regret that they had the secondary effect of bringing to a deep and complete study of Christianity almost insurmountable difficulties.

teachings of Christ, which constitute the foundation of Christianity by definition itself, and from which it could not depart without ceasing to deserve its name, not to mention that one does not see what could replace them without compromising the "non-human" character outside of which there is no longer any authentic tradition. In reality, these teachings have not been touched by this nor modified in any way in their "literality," and the permanence of the text of the Gospels and of the other writings of the New Testament, which obviously go back to the first period of Christianity, constitutes sufficient proof of it[12]; what has changed is only their understanding, or, if one prefers, the perspective according to which they are envisaged and the signification that is given them in consequence, without moreover one being able to say that there is anything false or illegitimate in this signification, for it goes without saying that the same truths are capable of receiving an application in different domains, by virtue of the correspondences that exist between all orders of reality. Only, there are precepts which, concerning especially those who follow an initiatic way, and applicable consequently in a restricted milieu and in a way qualitatively homogeneous, become impracticable in fact if one wishes to extend them to the whole of human society; that is what one recognizes quite explicitly by considering them as being only "counsels of perfection," to which no obligatory character is attached[13]; this amounts to saying that each person is bound to follow the evangelical way only to the extent not only of his own capacity, which goes without saying, but even of what the contingent circumstances in which he finds himself placed allow him, and that is indeed all that one can reasonably require of those who do not aim to go beyond simple exoteric practice[14]. On the other hand, as for doctrine properly so called, if there are truths that can be understood at once exoterically and esoterically, according to senses relating to different degrees of reality, there are others which, belonging

12 Even if one admitted, which is not our case, the supposed conclusions of modern "criticism," which, with intentions too manifestly anti-traditional, strives to attribute to these writings dates as "late" as possible, they would certainly still be prior to the transformation of which we speak here.

13 We do not mean to speak of the abuses to which this sort of restriction or "minimization" may sometimes have given rise, but of the real necessities of an adaptation to a social milieu comprising individuals as different and as unequal as possible as to their spiritual level, and to whom an exoterism must nevertheless address itself in the same right and without any exception.

14 This exoteric practice could be defined as a necessary and sufficient minimum to assure "salvation," for that is the sole end to which it is in fact destined.

exclusively to esoterism and having no correspondence outside it, become, as we have already said, entirely incomprehensible when one tries to transfer them into the exoteric domain, and to which one must then necessarily limit oneself to expressing purely and simply in the form of "dogmatic" enunciations, without ever seeking to give the least explanation; these are those that constitute properly what one has agreed to call the "mysteries" of Christianity. In truth, the very existence of these "mysteries" would be entirely unjustifiable if one did not admit the esoteric character of original Christianity; by taking account of the latter, on the contrary, it appears as a normal and inevitable consequence of the "externalization" by which Christianity, while preserving the same form as to outward appearances, in its doctrine as well as in its rites, has become the exoteric and specifically religious tradition that we know today.

Among Christian rites, or more precisely among the sacraments that constitute their most essential part, those that present the greatest similarity with rites of initiation, and that consequently must be regarded as the "externalization" of them if they indeed had this character at the origin[15], are naturally, as we have already remarked elsewhere, those that can be received only once, and above all baptism. This, by which the neophyte was admitted into the Christian community and in some way "incorporated" into it, had to constitute, so long as it was an initiatic organization, the first initiation, that is to say the beginning of the "lesser mysteries"; and that is moreover what the character of "second birth" that it has retained indicates clearly, although with a different application, even in descending into the exoteric domain. Let us add at once, so as not to have to return to it, that confirmation seems to have marked accession to a higher degree, and the most probable thing is that this corresponded in principle to the completion of the "lesser mysteries"; as for orders, which now give only the possibility of exercising certain functions, they can only be the "externalization" of a priestly initiation, as such relating to the "greater

15 In saying here rites of initiation, we mean by that those which have properly as their aim the very communication of initiatic influence; it goes without saying that, apart from those, there can exist other initiatic rites, that is to say, reserved to an elite that has already received initiation: thus, for example, one can think that the Eucharist was primitively an initiatic rite in this sense, but not a rite of initiation.

mysteries."

To realize that, in what one might call the second state of Christianity, the sacraments no longer have any initiatic character and are truly only purely exoteric rites, it suffices in sum to consider the case of baptism, since everything else depends on it directly. At the origin, despite the "obscuration" of which we have spoken, one knows at least that, in order to confer baptism, one surrounded oneself with rigorous precautions, and that those who were to receive it were subjected to a long preparation. Currently, it is in some sense the complete opposite that takes place, and one seems to have done everything possible to facilitate to the utmost the reception of this sacrament, since not only is it given to anyone whatsoever indiscriminately, without any question of qualification and preparation having to arise, but even it can also be conferred validly by anyone whatsoever, whereas the other sacraments can be only by those, priests or bishops, who exercise a determined ritual function. These facilities, as well as the fact that children are baptized as soon as possible after their birth, which obviously excludes the idea of any preparation whatsoever, can be explained only by a radical change in the very conception of baptism, a change following which it was considered as an indispensable condition for "salvation," and which consequently had to be assured to the greatest possible number of individuals, whereas primitively it was a matter of something quite different. This way of seeing, according to which the "salvation" that is the final end of all exoteric rites is necessarily linked to admission into the Christian Church, is in sum only a consequence of this sort of "exclusivism" that is inevitably inherent in the point of view of every exoterism as such. We do not think it useful to insist further, for it is too clear that a rite that is conferred on newborn children, and without even any concern to determine their qualifications by any means whatsoever, cannot have the character and the value of an initiation, even if that initiation were reduced to being no more than simply virtual; we shall moreover return in a moment to the question of the possibility of the subsistence of a virtual initiation by the Christian sacraments.

We shall also note incidentally a point that is not without importance:

namely that, in Christianity as it is currently, and contrary to how it was at first, all rites without exception are public; everyone can attend them, even those that would seem to have to be more particularly "reserved," such as the ordination of a priest or the consecration of a bishop, and a fortiori a baptism or a confirmation. Now that would be an inadmissible thing if it were a matter of rites of initiation, which normally can be performed only in the presence of those who have already received the same initiation[16]; between publicity on the one hand and esoterism and initiation on the other, there is obviously incompatibility. If, however, we regard this argument only as secondary, it is because, if there were no others, one could claim that there is there only an abuse due to a certain degeneracy, as can sometimes occur in an initiatic organization without its thereby going so far as to lose its proper character; but we have seen that, precisely, the descent of Christianity into the exoteric order was in no way to be regarded as a degeneracy, and moreover the other reasons we set forth suffice fully to show that, in reality, there can no longer be any initiation there.

If there were still a virtual initiation, as some have envisaged in the objections they made to us, and if consequently those who have received the Christian sacraments, or even baptism alone, then had no need to seek another form of initiation whatsoever[17], how could one explain the existence of initiatic organizations specifically Christian, such as there were incontestably throughout the Middle Ages, and what could then be their reason for being, since their particular rites would in some way duplicate the ordinary rites of Christianity? One will say that these constitute or represent only an initiation into the "lesser mysteries," so that the search for another initiation would have imposed itself on those who would have wanted to go further and accede to the "greater

16 Following the article on Buddhist ordination that we mentioned previously, we posed to A. K. Coomaraswamy a question on this subject; he confirmed to us that this ordination was never conferred except in the presence solely of members of the Sangha, composed only of those who had themselves received it, to the exclusion not only of those foreign to Buddhism, but also of "lay" adherents, who were in sum only associates "from the outside."

17 We greatly fear, in truth, that that is, for many, the principal motive that pushes them to wish to persuade themselves that Christian rites have kept an initiatic value; at bottom, they would like to dispense with all regular initiatic attachment and nonetheless be able to claim to obtain results of this order; even if they admit that these results can be only exceptional in present conditions, each willingly believes himself destined to be among the exceptions; it goes without saying that there is there only a deplorable illusion.

mysteries"; but, besides the fact that it is highly unlikely, not to say more, that all those who entered the organizations in question were ready to approach this domain, there is against such a supposition a decisive fact: the existence of Christian Hermeticism, since, by definition itself, Hermeticism belongs precisely to the "lesser mysteries"; and we are not speaking of the initiations of a trade, which also relate to that same domain, and which, even in cases where they cannot be called specifically Christian, nonetheless required of their members, in a Christian milieu, the practice of the corresponding exoterism.

Now, we must foresee yet another equivocation, for some might be tempted to draw from what precedes an erroneous conclusion, thinking that, if the sacraments no longer have any initiatic character, it must follow that they can never have effects of this order, to which they would doubtless oppose certain cases where it seems indeed that it was otherwise; the truth is that in effect the sacraments cannot have such effects by themselves, their proper efficacy being limited to the exoteric domain, but that there is nevertheless something else to consider in this regard. Indeed, wherever there exist initiations that belong specifically to a determined traditional form and that take as their base the very exoterism of the latter, exoteric rites can, for those who have received such an initiation, be transposed in some way into another order, in the sense that they will use them as a support for the initiatic work itself, and that consequently, for them, the effects will no longer be limited to the sole exoteric order as they are for the generality of adherents of the same traditional form; in this, it is in Christianity as in every other tradition, provided that there is or that there has been a properly Christian initiation. Only, it is understood that, far from dispensing with regular initiation or being able to take its place, this initiatic use of exoteric rites presupposes it on the contrary essentially as the necessary condition of its very possibility, a condition to which the most exceptional qualifications could not supply, and outside of which everything that surpasses the ordinary level can at most end only in mysticism, that is to say in something that in reality still belongs only to religious exoterism.

One can easily understand, by what we have just said last, what it really was with those who, in the Middle Ages, left writings of manifestly initiatic inspiration, and whom today one commonly has the fault of taking for "mystics," because one no longer knows anything else, but who were certainly something quite different. It is in no way to be supposed that it was a matter there of cases of "spontaneous" initiation, or of exceptional cases in which a virtual initiation remaining attached to the sacraments could have become effective, whereas there were all the possibilities of a normal attachment to one of the regular initiatic organizations that existed at that time, often even under the cover of religious orders and within them, although in no way being confused with them. We cannot extend ourselves further so as not to lengthen this exposition indefinitely, but we shall note that it is precisely when these initiations ceased to exist, or at least to be sufficiently accessible to still truly offer these possibilities of attachment, that mysticism properly so called arose, so that the two things appear as closely linked[18]. What we say here moreover applies only to the Latin Church, and what is very remarkable also is that, in the Eastern Churches, there has never been mysticism in the sense in which it is understood in Western Christianity since the sixteenth century; this fact can give one to think that a certain initiation of the kind of those to which we alluded must have been maintained in these Churches, and, indeed, that is what one finds there with hesychasm, whose truly initiatic character does not seem doubtful, even if, there as in many other cases, it has been more or less diminished in the course of modern times, as a natural consequence of the general conditions of this period, from which scarcely any initiations can escape except those that are extremely little spread, whether they have always been so or whether they have voluntarily decided to "close" themselves more than ever in order to avoid all degeneracy. In hesychasm, initiation properly so called is essentially constituted by the regular transmission of certain formulas, exactly comparable to the communication of mantras in the Hindu tradition and to that of the wird in the Islamic

18 W e do not mean to say that certain forms of Christian initiation did not continue later, since we even have reasons to think that something of them still subsists currently, but that in milieux so restricted that, in fact, one can consider them as practically inaccessible, or else, as we are going to say, in branches of Christianity other than the Latin Church.

turuq; there also exists there a whole "technique" of invocation as the proper means of inner work[19], a means quite distinct from Christian exoteric rites, although this work can nonetheless also find a point of support in these as we have explained, once, with the required formulas, the influence for which they serve as vehicle has been validly transmitted, which naturally implies the existence of an uninterrupted initiatic chain, since one can obviously transmit only what one has oneself received[20]. These are again questions that we can only indicate here very summarily, but, from the fact that hesychasm is still alive in our days, it seems to us that it would be possible to find from that side certain clarifications as to what may have been the characteristics and methods of other Christian initiations that unfortunately belong to the past.

To conclude finally, we can say this: in spite of the initiatic origins of Christianity, it, in its present state, is certainly nothing other than a religion, that is to say, a tradition of an exclusively exoteric order, and it has in itself no other possibilities than those of every exoterism; it does not claim them at all moreover, since there is never question there of anything other than obtaining "salvation." An initiation can naturally be superposed on it, and it should even normally be so for the tradition to be truly complete, effectively possessing both the exoteric and esoteric aspects; but, in its Western form at least, this initiation, in fact, no longer exists at present. It is moreover understood that observance of exoteric rites is fully sufficient to attain "salvation"; that is already much, assuredly, and even it is all to which the immense majority of human beings can legitimately aspire, today more than ever; but what will those do, in these conditions, for whom, following the expression of certain mutaçawwufîn, "Paradise is still only a prison"?

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19 An interesting remark in this regard is that this invocation is designated in Greek by the term mnêmê, "memory" or "remembrance," which is here exactly the equivalent of the Arabic dhikr.

20 It is to be noted that, among modern interpreters of hesychasm, there are many who strive to "minimize" the importance of its properly "technical" side, either because that truly corresponds to their tendencies, or because they think thus to rid themselves of certain critiques that proceed from a complete misunderstanding of initiatic things; that is, in all cases, an example of those diminutions of which we spoke above.

ON THE TWO SAINT JOHNS

Although summer is generally regarded as a joyful season and winter as a sad season, insofar as the former represents in a way the triumph of light and the latter that of darkness, the two corresponding solstices nonetheless have, in reality, a character exactly opposite to that; this may seem a rather strange paradox, and yet it is quite easy to understand why this is so as soon as one has some knowledge of the traditional data concerning the course of the annual cycle. Indeed, that which has reached its maximum can only decrease, and that which has reached its minimum can, on the contrary, only immediately begin to increase[1]; this is why the summer solstice marks the beginning of the descending half of the year, and the winter solstice, inversely, that of its ascending half; and this is also what explains, from the point of view of its cosmic significance, this saying of Saint John the Baptist, whose birth coincides with the summer solstice: "He must increase (the Christ born at the winter solstice), and I must decrease[2]." It is known that, in the Hindu tradition, the ascending phase is related to the dêva-yâna, and the descending phase to the pitri-yâna; consequently, in the Zodiac, the sign of Cancer, corresponding to the summer solstice, is the "gate of men," which gives access to the pitri-yâna, and the sign of Capricorn, corresponding to the winter solstice, is the "gate of the gods," which gives access to the dêva-yâna. In reality, it is the ascending half of the annual cycle that is the "joyful" period, that is to say beneficial or favorable, and its descending half that is the "sad" period, that is to say maleficent or unfavorable; and the same character naturally belongs to the solstitial gate that opens each of these two periods into which the year is divided by the very direction of the sun's course.

It is known, on the other hand, that in Christianity it is the feasts of the two Saint Johns that are in direct relation with the two solstices[3];

1 This idea is expressed notably several times, under various forms, in the Tao-te-King; it is related more particularly, in the Far-Eastern tradition, to the vicissitudes of yin and yang.

2 Saint John, III, 30.

3 They are in reality situated a little after the exact date of the two solstices, which makes their character appear even more clearly, since the descent and the ascent have then already effectively begun; to this corresponds, in Vedic symbolism, the fact that the gates of the pitri-loka and of the dêva-loka are said to be situat-

and what is quite remarkable, although we have never seen it pointed out anywhere, is that what we have just recalled is expressed in a certain way by the double meaning that is included in the very name John[4]. Indeed, the word hanan, in Hebrew, has at once the sense of "benevolence" and "mercy" and that of "praise" (and it is at least curious to note that, in French itself, words such as grâce and merci also have exactly the same double meaning); consequently, the name Jahanan can mean "mercy of God" and also "praise to God." Now, it is easy to see that the first of these two meanings seems to apply quite particularly to Saint John the Baptist and the second to Saint John the Evangelist; one can moreover say that mercy is obviously "descending" and praise "ascending," which again brings us back to their relation with the two halves of the annual cycle[5].

In relation to the two Saint Johns and their solstitial symbolism, it is also interesting to consider a symbol that seems to be particular to Anglo-Saxon Masonry, or that at least has been preserved only there: it is a circle with a point at the center, enclosed between two parallel tangents; and these tangents are said to represent the two Saint Johns. The circle is in fact here the figure of the annual cycle, and its solar significance is moreover rendered more manifest by the presence of the central point, since the same figure is also at the same time the astrological sign of the sun; and the two straight parallel lines are the tangents to this circle at the two solstitial points, thus marking their character as "limit-points," because these points are indeed like the bounds that the sun can never exceed in the course of its movement; it is because these lines thus correspond to the two solstices that one can also say that they thereby represent the two Saint Johns. There is, however, in this representation, an at least apparent anomaly: the solstitial diameter of the annual cycle

ed respectively, not exactly to the south and to the north, but toward the southwest and toward the northeast.

4 We are speaking here of the etymological meaning of this name in Hebrew; as for the comparison between John and Janus, it is understood that it is a phonetic assimilation that obviously has no relation to etymology, but that is nonetheless important for that reason from the symbolic point of view, since, in fact, the feasts of the two Saint Johns have truly taken the place of those of Janus at the summer and winter solstices.

5 We shall recall here, by relating it more especially to the ideas of "sadness" and "joy" that we indicated above, the well-known "folkloric" figure, but doubtless generally little understood, of "John who weeps and John who laughs," which is fundamentally a representation equivalent to that of the two faces of Janus; "John who weeps" is the one who implores the mercy of God, that is to say Saint John the Baptist, and "John who laughs" is the one who addresses praises to Him, that is to say Saint John the Evangelist.

must, as we have explained on other occasions, be regarded as relatively vertical with respect to the equinoctial diameter, and it is moreover only in this way that the two halves of the cycle, going from one solstice to the other, can really appear respectively as ascending and descending, the solstitial points then being the highest point and the lowest point of the circle; under these conditions, the tangents at the extremities of the solstitial diameter, being perpendicular to it, will necessarily be horizontal. Now, in the symbol that we are considering at this moment, the two tangents are on the contrary depicted as vertical; there is therefore, in this special case, a certain modification introduced into the general symbolism of the annual cycle, which moreover is explained quite simply, for it is evident that it could only have been brought about by an assimilation that has been established between these two parallel lines and the two columns; the latter, which naturally can only be vertical, moreover also have, by their respective situation to the north and to the south, and at least from a certain point of view, an effective relation with solstitial symbolism.

This aspect of two columns is seen especially clearly in the case of the symbol of the "Columns of Hercules[6]"; the character of Hercules as a "solar hero" and the zodiacal correspondence of his twelve labors are too well known for it to be necessary to insist on them; and it is well understood that it is precisely this solar character that justifies the solstitial significance of the two columns to which his name is attached. Once this is so, the motto non plus ultra that is associated with these columns appears as having a double meaning: it does not express only, according to the usual interpretation that refers to the terrestrial point of view and that is moreover valid in its own order, that they mark the limits of the "known" world, that is to say in reality that they are the bounds that, for reasons it might be interesting to investigate, travelers were not permitted to pass; but it indicates at the same time, and no doubt one should say above all, that, from the celestial point of view, they are the limits that the sun cannot cross and between which, as between the two tangents that were spoken of earlier, its annual course

6 In the geographical representation that places these two columns on either side of the present Strait of Gibraltar, it is evident that the one situated in Europe is the column of the north, and the one situated in Africa is the column of the south.

is accomplished interiorly[7]. These latter considerations may seem rather far removed from our starting point, but in truth they are not, since they contribute to the explanation of a symbol that is expressly referred to the two Saint Johns; and moreover one can say that, in the Christian form of the tradition, everything that concerns solstitial symbolism is thereby also more or less directly related to the two Saint Johns.

7 On ancient Spanish coins, one sees a representation of the Columns of Hercules, linked by a sort of banderole on which the motto non plus ultra is inscribed; now, a fact that seems rather little known and that we shall signal here as a curiosity, is that from this representation is derived the usual sign of the American dollar; but all the importance was given there to the banderole, which was originally only an accessory, and which was changed into the letter S whose shape it roughly had, while the two columns, which constituted the essential element, were reduced to two small parallel strokes, vertical like the two tangents to the circle in the Masonic symbol that we have just explained: and the thing is not devoid of a certain irony, since precisely the "discovery" of America annulled in fact the ancient geographical application of the non plus ultra.

THE ESOTERISM OF THE GRAIL

When we speak of the esotericism of the Grail, we do not mean by that only that, like every truly traditional symbol, it presents an esoteric side, that is to say that, superposed upon its exterior and generally known meaning, there is another meaning of a deeper order, which is accessible only to those who have reached a certain degree of understanding. In reality, the symbol of the Grail, together with everything pertaining to it, is one of those whose very nature is essentially esoteric and initiatic; this is what explains many particularities that would otherwise appear as insoluble enigmas, and the outward diffusion that the Grail legend had, at a certain period and under certain circumstances, cannot change anything in this character. This calls for some explanations; but, first of all, we must point out that this diffusion is situated entirely within a very brief period, which probably does not exceed about half a century; it thus seems that what was involved was a sudden manifestation of something that we shall not try to define in a precise manner, and that would then have returned no less suddenly into the shadows; whatever its reasons may have been, there is here a historical problem at which we are surprised that one seems never to have thought of examining with the attention it would deserve.

The conditions in which this manifestation occurred call for some important observations; indeed, the Grail romances seem, at first sight, to contain rather mixed elements, and some, without however going so far as to deny the existence of a meaning of a spiritual order, have thought they could speak in this respect of “inventions of poets.” In truth, these inventions, when they are found in things of this order, far from bearing on what is essential, do no more than conceal it, voluntarily or not, under the deceptive appearances of some “fiction”; and sometimes they conceal it only too well, for, when they become too invasive, it ends by becoming almost impossible to discover the deep and original meaning. This danger is especially to be feared when the poet himself is not conscious of the real value of the symbols, for it is evident that this case can occur; the apologue of “the ass bearing relics”

applies here as in many other things; and the poet, then, may transmit without knowing it initiatic data whose true nature escapes him. The question arises here in a particularly pointed way: were the authors of the Grail romances in this case, or, on the contrary, were they conscious, to one degree or another, of the deep meaning of what they were expressing? It is certainly not easy to answer this with certainty, for appearances can be deceptive: in the presence of a mixture of insignificant or incoherent elements, one is tempted to think that the author did not know what he was talking about; yet it is not necessarily so, for it has often happened that obscurities and even contradictions were perfectly intended, and that useless details had expressly as their aim to mislead the attention of the profane, in the same way that a symbol can be intentionally concealed in a motif of ornamentation more or less complicated; in the Middle Ages especially, examples of this kind abound, if only in Dante and the "Faithful of Love." The fact that the higher meaning shows through less in Chrétien de Troyes, for example, than in Robert de Boron therefore does not necessarily prove that the former was less conscious of it than the latter; still less would one have to conclude that this meaning is absent from his writings, which would be an error comparable to that which consists in attributing to the ancient alchemists preoccupations of an exclusively material order, for the sole reason that they did not judge it appropriate to write in plain words that their science was in reality of a spiritual nature. Moreover, the question of the "initiation" of the authors of the romances is perhaps of less importance than one might believe at first sight, since, in any case, it changes nothing in the appearances under which the subject is presented; once it is a matter of an "externalization" of esoteric data, which moreover cannot in any way be a "popularization," it is easy to understand that it must be so. We shall go further: a profane person can even very well, for such an "externalization," have served as the spokesman for an initiatic organization, which will have chosen him for this purpose simply for his qualities as a poet or writer, or for any other contingent reason. Dante wrote in perfect knowledge of the facts; Chrétien de Troyes, Robert de Boron himself, and many others were probably much less conscious of what they were expressing and perhaps even some among them were not conscious of it at all; but it matters

little in the end, for, if there was behind them an initiatic organization, whatever it might have been besides, the danger of a deformation due to their incomprehension was thereby removed, that organization being able to guide them constantly without their even suspecting it, either by certain of its members supplying them with the elements to be worked with, or by suggestions or influences of another kind, more subtle and less "tangible," but no less real for that nor less effective.

This is still only one aspect of the question: from the fact that the Grail legend presents itself in a properly Christian form, and that nevertheless there are found in it elements of another provenance and whose origin is manifestly prior to Christianity, one has sometimes wished to consider these elements as "accidental" in a way, as having come to add themselves to the legend "from without" and having only a simply "folkloric" character. In this regard, we must say that the very conception of "folklore," as it is most commonly understood in our time, rests on a radically false idea, the idea that there are "popular creations," spontaneous products of the mass of the people; it is evident that this conception is closely linked to certain modern prejudices, and we shall not return here to all that we have said about it on other occasions. In reality, when it is a matter, as is almost always the case, of traditional elements in the true sense of that word, however deformed, diminished, or fragmentary they may sometimes be, and of things having a real symbolic value, though often disguised under an appearance more or less "magical" or "fairy-like," all that, far from being of popular origin, is not even in the end of human origin, since tradition is defined precisely, in its very essence, by its supra-human character. What can be popular is only the fact of "survival," when these elements belong to forms of tradition that have disappeared; and, in this respect, the term "folklore" takes on a meaning quite close to that of "paganism," taking account only of the etymology of the latter, and with the polemical and injurious intention removed. The people thus preserve, without understanding them, the debris of ancient traditions, sometimes even going back to a past so distant that it would be impossible to determine it exactly, and that one contents oneself, for that reason, with referring to the obscure domain of "prehistory"; in this they

fulfill the function of a sort of collective memory more or less "subconscious," whose content has manifestly come from elsewhere. What may seem most astonishing is that, when one goes to the bottom of things, one finds that what is thus preserved contains above all, under a more or less veiled form, a considerable sum of data of a properly esoteric order, that is to say precisely what is least popular by nature. There is only one plausible explanation for this fact: when a traditional form is on the point of dying out, its last representatives may very well voluntarily entrust to this collective memory of which we have just spoken what would otherwise be lost without return; it is, in sum, the only means of saving what can be saved to a certain extent; and, at the same time, the natural incomprehension of the mass is a sufficient guarantee that what possessed an esoteric character will not for that be stripped of it, but will remain only, like a sort of testimony of the past, for those who, in other times, will be capable of understanding it.

That being said, we do not see why one would attribute indiscriminately to "folklore," without further examination, all the "pre-Christian" elements, and more particularly Celtic ones, that are found in the Grail legend, for the distinction that it is appropriate to make in this regard is that of disappeared traditional forms and those that are presently living, and, consequently, the question that ought to be posed is that of knowing whether the Celtic tradition had really ceased to live when the legend in question took shape. That is at least disputable: on the one hand, this tradition may have been maintained longer than is ordinarily believed, with an organization more or less hidden, and, on the other hand, this legend itself, in its essential elements, may be much older than the "critics" think, not because there necessarily were texts today lost, but rather through an oral transmission that may have lasted several centuries, which is far from being an exceptional fact. We see there, for our part, the mark of a "junction" between two traditional forms, one old and the other new at that time, the Celtic tradition and the Christian tradition, a junction by which what had to be preserved from the former was, in a way, incorporated into the latter, no doubt modifying itself up to a certain point, by adaptation and assimilation, but not by transposing itself onto another plane as some would have it, for there are

equivalences between all regular traditions; there is therefore here quite another thing than a simple question of "sources," in the sense the scholars understand it. It would perhaps be difficult to specify exactly the place and date where this junction was effected, but that has only a secondary and almost purely historical interest; it is moreover easy to conceive that such matters are of those that leave no traces in written "documents." The important point for us, and which does not seem at all doubtful to us, is that the origins of the Grail legend must be referred to the transmission of certain traditional elements, of a more properly initiatic order, from Druidism to Christianity; this transmission having been effected regularly, and whatever its modalities may moreover have been, these elements then formed an integral part of Christian esotericism. The existence of this latter in the Middle Ages is absolutely certain; proofs of every kind abound for whoever knows how to see them, and denials due to modern incomprehension, whether they come from partisans or adversaries of Christianity, prove nothing against this fact. It must moreover be well noted that we say "Christian esotericism," and not "esoteric Christianity"; it is not, indeed, a matter of a special form of Christianity, it is a matter of the "interior" side of the Christian tradition, and it is easy to understand that there is there more than a simple nuance. Moreover, when there is occasion to distinguish thus in a traditional form two faces, the one exoteric and the other esoteric, it must be understood that they do not relate to the same domain, so that there can be between them no conflict or opposition of any kind; in particular, when exotericism takes on the specifically religious character, as is the case here, the corresponding esotericism, while necessarily taking its base and support from it, has in itself nothing to do with the religious domain and is situated in a totally different order. It follows immediately from this that this esotericism cannot in any case be represented by "Churches" or "sects" of any kind, which, by definition, are always religious, therefore exoteric; it is true that certain "sects" may have been born from a confusion between the two domains, and from an erroneous "externalization" of esoteric data badly understood and badly applied; but true initiatic organizations, maintaining themselves strictly on their own ground, necessarily remain foreign to such deviations, and their very "regularity" obliges them to

recognize only what presents a character of rigorous orthodoxy, even if it be in the exoteric order. One is thus assured by that that those who wish to attribute to “sects” what concerns esotericism or initiation are on the wrong track and can only go astray; there is no need to examine matters more closely to dismiss any hypothesis of this kind; and, if one finds in some “sects” elements that seem to be of an esoteric nature, one must conclude, not that they have their origin there, but, on the contrary, that they have there been diverted from their true meaning.

Once this is so, certain apparent difficulties to which we alluded at the beginning are immediately resolved, or, rather, one realizes that they do not exist: there is no reason, for example, to ask what can be the situation, in relation to Christian orthodoxy understood in the ordinary sense, of a line of transmission outside “apostolic succession,” such as that which is in question in certain versions of the Grail legend; if it is a matter of an initiatic hierarchy, the religious or ecclesiastical hierarchy cannot in any way be affected by its existence, which does not concern it, and which moreover it has no need to know “officially,” so to speak, since it itself has competence and exercises legitimate jurisdiction only in the exoteric domain. Likewise, when there is question of a secret formula in relation with certain rites, there is a strange naïveté in asking whether the loss or omission of this formula risks preventing the celebration of the Mass from being regarded as valid; the Mass, as it is, is a religious rite, and here it is a matter of an initiatic rite, as is sufficiently indicated by this secret character; each is valid in its own order, and, even if the one and the other have in common a “eucharistic” character, as is also the case for the Rosicrucian supper, that changes nothing in this essential distinction, any more than the fact that one and the same symbol can be interpreted at once from the exoteric and the esoteric points of view prevents these from being profoundly distinct and relating, as we have already said, to entirely different domains; whatever the external resemblances may sometimes be, which moreover are explained by certain real correspondences, the scope and aim of initiatic rites are altogether other than those of religious rites.

Now, that the writings concerning the Grail legend emanated, directly or

indirectly, from an initiatic organization, does not mean that they constitute an initiation ritual, as some have supposed rather bizarrely; and it is curious to note that one has never put forward a similar hypothesis, to our knowledge at least, for works that nevertheless describe much more manifestly an initiatic process, such as the Divine Comedy or the Romance of the Rose; it is quite evident that not all writings that present an esoteric character are therefore rituals. In the present case, this supposition runs up against a certain number of implausibilities: such is, notably, the fact that the supposed recipient would have a question to ask, instead of having, on the contrary, to answer the questions of the initiator, as generally happens; the divergences that exist between the different versions are likewise incompatible with the character of a ritual, which necessarily has a fixed and well-defined form; but we think it of little use to insist further on this point. On the other hand, when we speak of initiatic organizations, it must be well understood that one must in no way, following a very widespread error that we have often had to point out, represent them as being more or less what are today called "societies," with all the apparatus of external formalities that this word implies; if some of them, in the West, have ended by taking such a form, that is only the effect of a kind of quite modern degeneration. Where our contemporaries find nothing resembling a "society," they seem too often to see no other possibility than that of something vague and indeterminate, having only a simply "ideal" existence, that is to say, in sum, for those who are not taken in by words, purely imaginary; but initiatic realities have nothing in common with these nebulous conceptions, and they are on the contrary something very "positive." What it is important to know above all is that no initiation can exist outside of any organization and any regular transmission; and precisely, if one wishes to know where there truly lies what has sometimes been called the "secret of the Grail," one must refer to the constitution of the spiritual centers from which all initiation emanates, for, under the cover of legendary accounts, it is essentially of that that it is a matter in reality.

We set forth, in our study on the King of the World, the considerations relating to this subject, and we can scarcely do more here than

summarize them; but we must at least indicate what the symbolism of the Grail is in itself, leaving aside the secondary details of the legend, however significant they may nonetheless be. In this regard, we must say first of all that, although we have spoken hitherto only of the Celtic tradition and the Christian tradition, because these are those that concern us directly when it is a question of the Grail, the symbol of the cup or the vessel is in reality one of those that, under one form or another, are found in all traditions, and of which one can say that they truly belong to universal symbolism. We must also specify that, whatever those may think who keep to a wholly external and exclusively historical point of view, this community of symbols, among the most diverse traditional forms and those most distant from one another in space and time, is in no way due to "borrowings" that, in many cases, would be quite impossible; the truth is that these symbols are universal because they belong above all to the primordial tradition from which all these diverse forms are derived directly or indirectly. The assimilations that certain "historians of religions" have envisaged on the subject of the "sacred vessel" are therefore entirely justified in themselves; but what must be rejected are, on the one hand, their explanations of the "migration of symbols" that claim to appeal only to simple historical contingencies, and also, on the other hand, the "naturalistic" interpretations that are due only to modern incomprehension of symbolism and that cannot be valid for any tradition without exception. It is particularly important here to call attention to this last point, because some, accepting without discussion such an interpretation for the "cornucopia" of ancient traditions, Celtic and others, have believed that there was there no real relation with the "eucharistic" meaning of the cup in Christianity, so that the connection established between the one and the other in the Grail legend would be only one of those supposedly "folkloric" elements that they consider as added on and whose character and scope they entirely misconceive; on the contrary, for whoever understands symbolism well, not only is there no radical difference there, but one can even say that it is exactly the same thing in essence. In all cases, what is at issue is always the receptacle containing the food or the drink of immortality, with all the meanings implied in it, including that which assimilates it to traditional knowledge itself, insofar as this is the "bread come down

from Heaven," in conformity with the evangelical affirmation according to which "man does not live only by bread (earthly), but by every word that comes out of the mouth of God," that is to say, in a general way, that emanates from a supra-human origin, and that, whatever exterior form it may assume, is always in the end an expression or a manifestation of the divine Word. This is moreover why the Grail is not only a cup, but also appears sometimes as a book, which is properly the "Book of Life," or the celestial prototype of all sacred Scriptures; the two aspects can even be found united, for, in certain versions, the book is replaced by an inscription traced on the cup by an angel or by Christ Himself. We shall also recall in this connection the lapsit exillis of Wolfram von Eschenbach, the stone fallen from Heaven and upon which there appeared on certain occasions inscriptions of an equally "non-human" origin; but we cannot insist unduly on these aspects less generally known than the one in which the Grail is represented in the form of a cup. We shall only remark, to show that, despite appearances, these different aspects are not contradictory among themselves, that even when it is a cup, the Grail is also at the same time a stone, and even a stone fallen from Heaven, since, according to the legend, it would have been cut by the angels from an emerald that fell from Lucifer's forehead at the time of his fall. This origin is particularly remarkable, for this frontal emerald is identified with the "third eye" of the Hindu tradition, which represents the "sense of eternity," which moreover brings us back to the idea of the food of immortality, for it is evident that true immortality is essentially linked to the possession of this "sense of eternity"; and, as this is given by the effective knowledge of traditional truth, one sees that all this is perfectly coherent in reality.

It is also said that the Grail was entrusted to Adam in the earthly Paradise, but that, at the time of his fall, Adam in his turn lost it, for he could not carry it with him when he was driven out of Eden; with the meaning we have just indicated, this is immediately understood. Indeed, man, removed from his original center, found himself henceforth enclosed in the temporal sphere; he could no longer, consequently, rejoin the unique point from which all things are contemplated under the aspect of eternity. In other terms, this possession of the "sense of

eternity" of which we have just spoken properly belongs to what all traditions call the "primordial state," the restoration of which constitutes the first stage of true initiation, being the prior condition of the effective conquest of supra-human states, for communication with these is possible only from the central point of the human state; and it is well understood that what the earthly Paradise represents is nothing other than the "Center of the World." Thus, the Grail corresponds at the same time to two things, a traditional doctrine and a spiritual state, which are closely bound to one another: he who possesses integrally the primordial tradition, and who has reached the degree of effective knowledge that this possession essentially implies, is in fact thereby reintegrated into the fullness of the "primordial state," which amounts to saying that he is henceforth restored in the "Center of the World."

The cup is moreover by itself one of the symbols whose meaning is essentially "central," just as the lance, which accompanies the Grail and is in some way complementary to it, is one of the traditional figurations of the "Axis of the World," which, passing through the central point of each state, links together all the states of being. This meaning of the cup results immediately from its symbolic assimilation with the heart; it is not without interest to note, in this regard, that, in the ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs, the heart itself was represented by a vessel; on the other hand, the heart and the cup both have as their geometric schema the triangle whose point is directed downward, such as is found notably in certain yantras of India. As for the Grail more particularly, under the specifically Christian form of the legend, its connection with the heart of Christ, whose blood it contains, is too evident for it to be necessary to insist further upon it. In all traditions, "Heart of the World" and "Center of the World" are equivalent expressions; there is moreover nothing contradictory there with what we said above concerning the "third eye," for, insofar as the heart is considered as the center of the being, it is also in it that the "sense of eternity" truly resides; but we cannot of course think of extending ourselves here on the concordance of these diverse symbols, nor on their relation with certain "localizations" corresponding to different degrees or spiritual states of the human being.

It remains for us still to speak somewhat of the "queste of the Grail," which is also connected to a very general symbolism, for, in almost all traditions, there is allusion to something that, from a certain period, would have been lost or at least hidden, and that initiation must make one find again; this "something" can be represented in very different ways according to the cases, but the meaning is always the same in essence. When it is said that Seth obtained to re-enter the earthly Paradise and was thus able to recover the precious vessel, then that others possessed it after him, one must understand that it is a matter of the establishment of a spiritual center destined to replace the lost Paradise, and which was like an image of it; and then this possession of the Grail represents the integral preservation of the primordial tradition in such a spiritual center. The loss of the Grail, or of one of its symbolic equivalents, is in sum the loss of tradition with all that it entails; in truth, moreover, this tradition is rather hidden than lost, or at least it can never be lost except for certain secondary centers, when these cease to be in direct relation with the supreme center. As for the latter, it always keeps intact the deposit of tradition, and it is not affected by the changes that occur in the outer world in the course of the development of the historical cycle; but, just as the earthly Paradise has become inaccessible, the supreme center, which in sum is its equivalent, can, in the course of a certain period, not be manifested outwardly, and then one can say that tradition is lost for the whole of humanity, for it is preserved only in certain rigorously closed centers, and the mass of men, although still receiving certain reflections by the intermediary of the particular traditional forms derived from it, no longer participates in it in a conscious and effective way, contrary to what took place in the original state. The loss of tradition can either be understood in this general sense, or be referred to the obscuring of the secondary spiritual center that governed more or less invisibly the destinies of such and such a particular people or such and such a determined civilization; one must therefore, each time one encounters a symbolism that relates to it, examine whether it must be interpreted in the one or the other of these two senses. Moreover, one must note that the very constitution of secondary centers, corresponding to particular traditional forms whatever they may be, already marks a first degree of obscuration vis-à-

vis primordial tradition, since the supreme center, from then on, is no longer in direct contact with the exterior, and the link is maintained only through the secondary centers that alone remain known; this is why there is often question of certain "substituted" things, which can be words or symbolic objects. On the other hand, if a secondary center comes to disappear, one can say that it is in some way reabsorbed into the supreme center, of which it was only an emanation; here as in the case of the general obscuration that occurs in conformity with cyclical laws, there are moreover degrees to be observed: it can happen that such a center will become only more hidden and more closed, and this fact can be represented by the same symbolism as its complete disappearance, any distancing from the exterior being at the same time, and in an equivalent measure, a return toward the Principle. We are here alluding more particularly to the symbolism of the final disappearance of the Grail: whether it was taken up to Heaven, according to certain versions, or whether it was transported into the "Kingdom of Prester John," according to certain others, that signifies exactly the same thing, although the "critics" who see contradictions everywhere can certainly scarcely suspect it. It is always a matter of this same withdrawal from the exterior toward the interior, because of the state of the world at a certain period, or, to speak more exactly, of that portion of the world that is in relation with the traditional form considered; this withdrawal moreover applies here only to the esoteric side of tradition, the exoteric side, in a case such as Christianity, having remained without any apparent change; but it is precisely by the esoteric side that the effective links with the supreme center are established and maintained, since these links necessarily imply the consciousness of the essential unity of all traditions, which cannot fall within the competence of exotericism, whose horizon is always limited exclusively to a particular form. That a certain relation with the supreme center nevertheless subsists, but in a way invisibly and unconsciously, so long as the traditional form considered remains alive, that must be inevitable all the same; if it were otherwise, indeed, that would amount to saying that the "spirit" has withdrawn from it entirely and that there truly remains only a dead body. It is said that the Grail was no longer seen as before, but it is not said that nobody saw it anymore; certainly, in principle at least, it is

always present for those who are “qualified”; but, in fact, those have become ever rarer, to the point of constituting only an infinitesimal exception; and, since the time when it is said that the true Rosicrucians withdrew into Asia, that is to say no doubt also, symbolically, into the “Kingdom of Prester John,” what possibilities of attaining effective initiation can they still find open before them in the Western world?

ROSE-CROSS AND ROSICRUCIANS

Since we have been led to speak of the Rose-Croix, it may not be useless—although this subject relates to a particular case rather than to initiation in general—to add some clarifications on this point, for this name "Rose-Croix" is nowadays used in a vague and often abusive way, and applied indiscriminately to the most different persons, among whom very few, no doubt, would really have a right to it. To avoid all these confusions, it seems that the best course would be to establish a clear distinction between Rose-Croix and Rosicrucians, the latter term being able without inconvenience to receive a broader extension than the former; and it is probable that most alleged Rose-Croix, commonly designated as such, were in truth only Rosicrucians. To understand the usefulness and importance of this distinction, one must first recall that, as we have already said a moment ago, the true Rose-Croix never constituted an organization with defined outward forms, and that there were nevertheless, from the beginning of the seventeenth century at least, numerous associations that can be qualified as Rosicrucian[1], which in no way means that their members were Rose-Croix; one may even be sure that they were not, and this from the sole fact that they were part of such associations, which may seem paradoxical and even contradictory at first sight, but is nevertheless easily understandable in light of the considerations set forth previously.

The distinction we are indicating is far from being reduced to a mere question of terminology, and it is in reality connected to something of a much deeper order, since the term Rose-Croix is properly, as we have explained, the designation of an effective initiatic degree, that is to say, of a certain spiritual state, the possession of which is obviously not linked in a necessary way to the fact of belonging to a certain defined organization. What it represents is what one may call the perfection of the human state, for the very symbol of the Rose-Croix figures, by the

1 It was to an organization of this kind that Leibniz belonged notably; we have spoken elsewhere of the manifestly Rosicrucian inspiration of certain of his conceptions, but we have also shown that it was not possible to consider him as having received more than a simply virtual initiation, and moreover incomplete even from the theoretical point of view (see The Principles of the Infinitesimal Calculus).

two elements of which it is composed, the reintegration of the being at the center of this state and the full expansion of its individual possibilities from this center; it thus marks very exactly the restoration of the "primordial state," or, what amounts to the same thing, the completion of initiation into the "lesser mysteries." On the other hand, from the point of view that may be called "historical," one must take account of the fact that this designation of Rose-Croix, expressly linked to the use of a certain symbolism, has been employed only in certain determined circumstances of times and places, outside of which it would be illegitimate to apply it; one could say that those who possessed the degree in question appeared as Rose-Croix only in these circumstances and for contingent reasons, just as they could, in other circumstances, appear under other names and under other aspects. This, of course, does not mean that the very symbol to which this name refers cannot be much older than the use that was thus made of it, and even, as for every truly traditional symbol, it would no doubt be entirely vain to seek for it a defined origin. What we mean to say is only that the name drawn from the symbol was applied to an initiatic degree only from the fourteenth century onward, and moreover only in the Western world; it thus applies only in relation to a certain traditional form, which is that of Christian esotericism, or, more precisely still, of Christian hermeticism; we shall return further on to what must be understood exactly by the term "hermeticism."

What we have just said is indicated by the "legend" itself of Christian Rosenkreutz, whose name is moreover purely symbolic, and in whom it is quite doubtful that one must see a historical personage, whatever some may have said, but who appears rather as the representation of what one may call a "collective entity"[2]. The general meaning of the "legend" of this supposed founder, and in particular of the travels attributed to him[3], seems to be that, after the destruction of the Order of the Temple, the initiates of Christian esotericism reorganized

2 This "legend" is in sum of the same kind as the other initiatic "legends" to which we have already alluded previously.

3 We shall recall here the allusion we made above to the initiatic symbolism of the journey; there are moreover, especially in connection with hermeticism, many other journeys, like those of Nicolas Flamel for example, which appear indeed to have above all a symbolic meaning.

themselves, in agreement with the initiates of Islamic esotericism, in order to maintain, as far as possible, the link that had apparently been broken by this destruction; but this reorganization had to be effected in a more hidden way, invisible as it were, and without taking its support in an institution known outwardly and which, as such, could have been destroyed once again[4]. The true Rose-Croix were properly the inspirers of this reorganization, or, if one prefers, they were the possessors of the initiatic degree of which we have spoken, envisaged especially insofar as they played this role, which continued until the moment when, as a result of other historical events, the traditional link in question was definitively broken for the Western world, which took place in the course of the seventeenth century[5]. It is said that the Rose-Croix then withdrew into the East, which means that henceforth there was no longer in the West any initiation allowing one effectively to attain this degree, and also that the action which had been exercised there up to then for the maintenance of the corresponding traditional teaching ceased to manifest itself, at least in a regular and normal way[6].

As for knowing who the true Rose-Croix were, and saying with certainty whether this or that personage was one of them, that appears as entirely impossible, by the very fact that it is essentially a matter of a spiritual state, therefore purely interior, which it would be very imprudent to wish to judge by any outward signs whatsoever. Moreover, because of the nature of their role, these Rose-Croix could not, as such, leave any visible trace in profane history, so that, even if their names could be known, they would probably teach nothing to anyone; in this regard, moreover, we refer to what we have already said about changes of names, which sufficiently explains what may be the case in reality. As for the persons whose names are known, notably as authors of this or

4 Hence the name "College of Invisibles" sometimes given to the collectivity of the Rose-Croix.

5 The precise date of this rupture is marked, in the outward history of Europe, by the conclusion of the Treaties of Westphalia, which put an end to what still subsisted of medieval "Christendom" in order to substitute for it a purely "political" organization, in the modern and profane sense of this word.

6 It would be entirely useless to seek to determine "geographically" the place of retreat of the Rose-Croix; of all the assertions one encounters on this subject, the truest is certainly that according to which they withdrew into the "kingdom of Prester John," the latter being nothing other, as we have explained elsewhere (The King of the World, pp. 13–15), than a representation of the supreme spiritual center, where are indeed preserved in a latent state, until the end of the present cycle, all the traditional forms which, for one reason or another, have ceased to manifest themselves outwardly.

that writing, and who are commonly designated as Rose-Croix, the most probable thing is that, in many cases, they were influenced or inspired more or less directly by the Rose-Croix, for whom they served in a way as spokesmen[7], which we shall express by saying that they were only Rosicrucians, whether or not they belonged to one of the groupings to which one can give the same designation. On the other hand, if it happened exceptionally and as it were accidentally that a true Rose-Croix played a role in outward events, it would be in a way despite his quality rather than because of it, and then historians can be very far from suspecting this quality, so much do the two things belong to different domains. All this, assuredly, is little satisfying for the curious, but they must reconcile themselves to it; many things thus escape the means of investigation of profane history, which necessarily, by their very nature, allow one to grasp nothing more than what one can call the "outside" of events.

One must still add another reason why the true Rose-Croix had always to remain unknown: it is that none of them can ever affirm himself as such, any more than, in Islamic initiation, any authentic Çûfî can lay claim to this title. There is even here a similarity that it is particularly interesting to note, although, in truth, there is not an equivalence between the two designations, for what is implied in the name Çûfî is in reality of a higher order than what the name Rose-Croix indicates and refers to possibilities that surpass those of the human state, even envisaged in its perfection; it ought even, in all rigor, to be reserved exclusively to the being who has reached the realization of the "Supreme Identity," that is to say, the ultimate goal of all initiation[8]; but it goes without saying that such a being possesses a fortiori the degree that makes the Rose-Croix and can, if there is occasion, accomplish the corresponding functions. One moreover commonly makes of the name Çûfî the same abuse as of that of Rose-Croix, going so far as sometimes

7 It is very doubtful that a Rose-Croix ever wrote anything himself, and, in any case, it could only be in a strictly anonymous way, his very quality forbidding him to present himself then as a simple individual speaking in his own name.

8 It is not without interest to indicate that the word Çûfî, by the value of the letters that compose it, is numerically equivalent to el-hikmah el-ilahiyah, that is to say "divine wisdom." — The difference between the Rose-Croix and the Çûfî corresponds exactly to that which exists, in Taoism, between the "true man" and the "transcendent man."

to apply it to those who are only on the path that leads to effective initiation, without having yet attained even the first degrees of it; and one can note in this connection that a similar illegitimate extension is given no less commonly to the word Yogî with respect to the Hindu tradition, so that this word, which, it too, properly designates the one who has attained the supreme goal, and which is thus the exact equivalent of Çûfî, comes to be applied to those who are still only at the preliminary stages and even at the most exterior preparation. Not only in such a case, but even for the one who has reached the highest degrees without nevertheless having arrived at the final term, the designation that properly applies is that of mutaçawwuf; and, since the Çûfî himself is marked by no outward distinction, this same designation will also be the only one that he can take or accept, not by virtue of purely human considerations like prudence or humility, but because his spiritual state truly constitutes an incommunicable secret[9]. It is an analogous distinction to that one, in a more restricted order (since it does not go beyond the bounds of the human state), that can be expressed by the two terms Rose-Croix and Rosicrucian, the latter being able to designate every aspirant to the state of Rose-Croix, at whatever degree he may have effectively arrived, and even if he has not yet received more than a simply virtual initiation in the form to which this designation properly applies in fact. On the other hand, one can draw from what we have just said a sort of negative criterion, in the sense that, if someone has himself declared himself Rose-Croix or Çûfî, one can then affirm, without even needing to examine things more deeply, that he certainly was not so in reality.

Another negative criterion results from the fact that the Rose-Croix never bound themselves to any outward organization; if someone is known as having been a member of such an organization, one can again affirm that, at least so long as he actively took part in it, he was not a true Rose-Croix. It is moreover to be noted that organizations of this kind bore the title of Rose-Croix only very late, since one sees it appear thus, as we said above, only at the beginning of the seventeenth century,

9 This is moreover, in Arabic, one of the senses of the word sirr, “secret,” in the particular usage that the “technical” terminology of esotericism makes of it.

that is to say shortly before the moment when the true Rose-Croix withdrew from the West; and it is even visible, by many indications, that those which then made themselves known under this title were already more or less deviated, or in any case very far removed from the original source. All the more was it so for the organizations that were constituted still later under the same appellation, most of which could doubtless have claimed, with regard to the Rose-Croix, no authentic and regular filiation, however indirect it might have been[10]; and we are not speaking, of course, of the multiple contemporary pseudo-initiatic formations that have of Rosicrucian only the usurped name, possessing no trace of any traditional doctrine whatsoever, and having simply adopted, by a wholly individual initiative of their founders, a symbol that each interprets according to his own fancy, for want of knowing its true meaning, which escapes these alleged Rosicrucians just as completely as it does the first profane person to come along.

There is still a point to which we must return for greater precision: we said that there must have been, at the origin of Rosicrucianism, a collaboration between initiates of the two Christian and Islamic esotericisms; this collaboration also had to continue thereafter, since it was precisely a matter of maintaining the link between the initiations of East and West. We shall go even further: the same personages, whether they came from Christianity or from Islam, could, if they lived in the East and in the West (and the constant allusions to their travels, all symbolism aside, suggest that this must have been the case for many of them), be at once Rose-Croix and Çûfî (or mutaçawwufîn of the higher degrees), the spiritual state they had attained implying that they were beyond the differences that exist between outward forms, and that in no way affect the essential and fundamental unity of traditional doctrine. Of course, it is nonetheless appropriate to maintain, between Taçawwuf and Rosicrucianism, the distinction that is that of two different forms of traditional teaching; and the Rosicrucians, more or less direct disciples of the Rose-Croix, are solely those who follow the special way of Christian hermeticism; but there can be no initiatic organization fully

10 It was probably so, in the eighteenth century, for organizations such as that which was known under the name “Gold Rosy Cross.”

worthy of this name and possessing the effective consciousness of its goal that does not have, at the summit of its hierarchy, beings who have gone beyond the diversity of formal appearances. Those ones will be able, according to circumstances, to appear as Rosicrucians, as mutaçawwufîn, or in other aspects still; they are truly the living link between all traditions, because, by their consciousness of unity, they participate effectively in the great primordial Tradition, from which all the others are derived by adaptation to times and places, and which is one like Truth itself.

SAINT BERNARD

Among the great figures of the Middle Ages, there are few whose study is more apt than that of Saint Bernard to dispel certain prejudices dear to the modern mind. What, indeed, is more disconcerting for it than to see a pure contemplative, who always wished to be and remain such, called to play a preponderant role in the conduct of the affairs of Church and State, and often succeeding where all the prudence of professional politicians and diplomats had failed? What could be more surprising and even more paradoxical, according to the ordinary way of judging things, than a mystic who feels nothing but disdain for what he calls "the quibbles of Plato and the refinements of Aristotle," and who nevertheless triumphs without effort over the most subtle dialecticians of his time? The whole life of Saint Bernard might seem destined to show, by a striking example, that there exist, for resolving problems of the intellectual order and even of the practical order, means wholly other than those which one has for too long been accustomed to regard as alone effective, doubtless because they alone are within reach of a purely human wisdom, which is not even the shadow of true wisdom. This life thus appears, in a way, as an anticipated refutation of those errors—opposed in appearance, but in reality mutually supportive—which are rationalism and pragmatism; and, at the same time, it confounds and overturns, for whoever examines it impartially, all the preconceived ideas of "scientistic" historians who, with Renan, hold that "the negation of the supernatural constitutes the very essence of criticism"—a thing we admit quite willingly, but because we see in this incompatibility the exact opposite of what they see in it: the condemnation of "criticism" itself, and not at all that of the supernatural. In truth, what lessons could, in our time, be more profitable than these?

Bernard was born in 1090 at Fontaines-lès-Dijon; his parents belonged to the high nobility of Burgundy, and, if we note this fact, it is because it seems to us that certain traits of his life and his doctrine, of which we shall have to speak in what follows, can to a certain extent be connected with this origin. We do not mean only that it is possible to explain

thereby the sometimes bellicose ardor of his zeal or the violence he brought on many occasions into the polemics into which he was drawn, and which was moreover entirely superficial, for goodness and gentleness unquestionably formed the foundation of his character. What we mean above all to allude to are his relations with chivalric institutions and ideals, to which, moreover, one must always accord great importance if one wishes to understand the events and even the spirit of the Middle Ages.

It was around his twentieth year that Bernard conceived the project of withdrawing from the world; and in a short time he succeeded in making all his brothers share his views, along with some of his relatives and a certain number of his friends. In this first apostolate, his power of persuasion was such, in spite of his youth, that soon "he became," says his biographer, "the terror of mothers and wives; friends feared to see him approach their friends." There is already something extraordinary in that, and it would assuredly be insufficient to invoke the power of "genius," in the profane sense of this word, to explain such an influence. Is it not better to recognize in it the action of divine grace which, penetrating in a way the whole person of the apostle and radiating outward by its superabundance, was communicated through him as through a channel, according to the comparison that he himself would employ later in applying it to the Blessed Virgin, and that one can also, by restricting its scope more or less, apply to all the saints?

Thus it was accompanied by some thirty young men that Bernard, in 1112, entered the monastery of Cîteaux, which he had chosen because of the rigor with which the rule was observed there, a rigor contrasting with the laxity that had been introduced into all the other branches of the Benedictine Order. Three years later, his superiors did not hesitate to entrust to him, despite his inexperience and his fragile health, the guidance of twelve religious who were going to found a new abbey, that of Clairvaux, which he was to govern until his death, always repulsing honors and the dignities that would so often be offered him in the course of his career. The renown of Clairvaux did not take long to spread far and wide, and the development that this abbey soon acquired was truly

prodigious: when its founder died, it sheltered, they say, about seven hundred monks, and it had given birth to more than sixty new monasteries.

The care Bernard brought to the administration of Clairvaux, regulating himself down to the most minute details of daily life, the part he took in the direction of the Cistercian Order as head of one of its first abbeys, the skill and success of his interventions to smooth over the difficulties that frequently arose with rival Orders—all this would already have sufficed to prove that what is called practical sense can very well sometimes be allied to the highest spirituality. There was there more than would have been needed to absorb all the activity of an ordinary man; and yet Bernard was soon to see opened before him a wholly different field of action, much against his will besides, for he never feared anything so much as being obliged to leave his cloister to mingle in the affairs of the outside world, from which he had believed he could isolate himself forever in order to devote himself entirely to asceticism and contemplation, without anything coming to distract him from what was in his eyes, according to the Gospel word, “the one thing necessary.” In this, he was greatly mistaken; but all the “distractions,” in the etymological sense, from which he could not exempt himself and about which it happened that he complained with some bitterness, did not prevent him from attaining the summits of mystical life. That is very remarkable; what is no less so is that, despite all his humility and all the efforts he made to remain in the shadows, his collaboration was called upon in all important affairs, and that, though he was nothing in the eyes of the world, all—including the highest civil and ecclesiastical dignitaries—always bowed spontaneously before his wholly spiritual authority, and we do not know whether this is more to the praise of the saint or of the age in which he lived. What a contrast between our time and the one in which a simple monk could, by the sole radiance of his eminent virtues, become in a way the center of Europe and of Christendom, the uncontested arbiter of all conflicts where the public interest was at stake, both in the political order and in the religious order, the judge of the most renowned masters of philosophy and theology, the restorer of the unity of the Church, the mediator between

the Papacy and the Empire, and finally see armies of several hundreds of thousands of men rise at his preaching!

Bernard had begun early to denounce the luxury in which most of the members of the secular clergy then lived, and even the monks of certain abbeys; his remonstrances had provoked striking conversions, among which that of Suger, the illustrious abbot of Saint-Denis, who, without yet bearing the title of first minister of the king of France, already fulfilled its functions. It was this conversion that made known at court the name of the abbot of Clairvaux, whom one there regarded, it seems, with a respect mingled with fear, because one saw in him the irreducible adversary of all abuses and all injustices; and soon, in fact, he was seen intervening in the conflicts that had broken out between Louis the Fat and various bishops, and protesting loudly against the encroachments of civil power upon the rights of the Church. In truth, these were still only affairs purely local, concerning only this monastery or that diocese; but, in 1130, events of an altogether different gravity occurred, which put the whole Church in peril, divided by the schism of the antipope Anacletus II, and it was on this occasion that Bernard's renown was to spread throughout all Christendom.

We do not have to retrace here the history of the schism in all its details: the cardinals, divided into two rival factions, had elected in succession Innocent II and Anacletus II; the former, forced to flee Rome, did not despair of his right and appealed to the universal Church. France responded first; at the council convened by the king at Étampes, Bernard appeared, says his biographer, "like a true envoy of God" in the midst of the bishops and lords assembled; all followed his opinion on the question submitted to their examination and recognized the validity of Innocent II's election. The latter was then on French soil, and it was at the abbey of Cluny that Suger came to announce to him the decision of the council; he went through the principal dioceses and was everywhere received with enthusiasm; this movement was going to bring about the adhesion of almost all Christendom. The abbot of Clairvaux went to the king of England and promptly overcame his hesitations; perhaps he also had a part, at least indirectly, in the recognition of Innocent II by King

Lothair and the German clergy. He then went to Aquitaine to combat the influence of Bishop Gérard of Angoulême, partisan of Anacletus II; but it was only in the course of a second journey in this region, in 1135, that he was to succeed in destroying the schism there by effecting the conversion of the count of Poitiers. In the interval, he had had to go to Italy, called by Innocent II, who had returned there with Lothair's support, but who was stopped by unforeseen difficulties due to the hostility of Pisa and Genoa; it was necessary to find an accommodation between the two rival cities and to get them to accept it; Bernard was charged with this difficult mission, and he discharged it with the most marvelous success. Innocent could finally return to Rome, but Anacletus remained entrenched in Saint Peter's, which it was impossible to seize; Lothair, crowned emperor at Saint John Lateran, soon withdrew with his army; after his departure, the antipope resumed the offensive, and the legitimate pontiff had to flee again and take refuge at Pisa. The abbot of Clairvaux, who had returned to his cloister, learned these news with consternation; shortly afterward there reached him word of the activity deployed by Roger, king of Sicily, to win all Italy to the cause of Anacletus, while at the same time assuring his own supremacy there. Bernard immediately wrote to the inhabitants of Pisa and Genoa to encourage them to remain faithful to Innocent; but this fidelity constituted only a very weak support, and, to reconquer Rome, it was from Germany alone that one could hope for effective aid. Unfortunately, the Empire was still prey to division, and Lothair could not return to Italy before having secured peace in his own country. Bernard left for Germany and worked at the reconciliation of the Hohenstaufen with the emperor; here again, his efforts were crowned with success; he saw their happy outcome consecrated at the Diet of Bamberg, which he then left to go to the council that Innocent II had convened at Pisa. On this occasion, he had to address remonstrances to Louis the Fat, who had opposed the departure of the bishops of his kingdom; the prohibition was lifted, and the principal members of the French clergy could respond to the call of the head of the Church. Bernard was the soul of the council; in the interval between sessions, relates a historian of the time, his door was besieged by those who had some grave affair to handle, as if this humble monk had had the power

to decide at his pleasure all ecclesiastical questions. Delegated afterward to Milan to bring this city back to Innocent II and to Lothair, he was there acclaimed by the clergy and the faithful who, in a spontaneous manifestation of enthusiasm, wished to make him their archbishop, and he had the greatest difficulty in escaping this honor. He aspired only to return to his monastery; he did indeed re-enter it, but it was not for long.

From the beginning of the year 1136, Bernard had to abandon his solitude once again in order to come, according to the pope's desire, to join in Italy the German army commanded by Duke Henry of Bavaria, the emperor's son-in-law. Misunderstanding had broken out between the latter and Innocent II; Henry, little concerned with the rights of the Church, affected in all circumstances to occupy himself only with the interests of the State. Thus the abbot of Clairvaux had much to do to reestablish concord between the two powers and reconcile their rival pretensions, notably in certain questions of investitures, where he seems to have played constantly a moderating role. However, Lothair, who had himself taken command of the army, subjugated all southern Italy; but he had the fault of rejecting the peace proposals of the king of Sicily, who did not delay in taking his revenge, putting everything to fire and sword. Bernard did not then hesitate to present himself to Roger's camp, who received very badly his words of peace and to whom he predicted a defeat which in fact occurred; then, attaching himself to his steps, he rejoined him at Salerno and strove to turn him away from the schism into which ambition had thrown him. Roger consented to hear in adversarial fashion the partisans of Innocent and of Anacletus, but, while seeming to conduct the inquiry impartially, he sought only to gain time and refused to make a decision; at least this debate had the fortunate result of bringing about the conversion of one of the principal authors of the schism, Cardinal Peter of Pisa, whom Bernard brought back with him to Innocent II. This conversion dealt a terrible blow to the antipope's cause; Bernard knew how to profit from it, and in Rome itself, by his ardent and compelling word, he managed in a few days to detach from Anacletus's party most of the dissidents. This took place in 1137, around the time of the Christmas feasts; a month later, Anacletus died suddenly. Some of the cardinals most committed to the schism

elected a new antipope under the name Victor IV; but their resistance could not last long, and, on the day of the octave of Pentecost, all made their submission; from the following week, the abbot of Clairvaux resumed the road to his monastery.

This very rapid summary suffices to give an idea of what one might call Saint Bernard's political activity, which moreover did not stop there: from 1140 to 1144, he had to protest against the abusive meddling of King Louis the Younger in episcopal elections, then to intervene in a serious conflict between this same king and Count Thibaut of Champagne; but it would be tedious to dwell on these various events. In sum, one can say that Bernard's conduct was always determined by the same intentions: to defend right, to combat injustice, and perhaps above all to maintain unity in the Christian world. It is this constant preoccupation with unity that animates him in his struggle against the schism; it is it again that makes him undertake, in 1145, a journey into Languedoc to bring back to the Church the neo-Manichaean heretics who were beginning to spread in that region. It seems that he had ceaselessly present in his mind this word of the Gospel: "That they may all be one, as my Father and I are one."

However, the abbot of Clairvaux had not only to struggle in the political domain, but also in the intellectual domain, where his triumphs were no less brilliant, since they were marked by the condemnation of two eminent adversaries, Abelard and Gilbert of la Porrée. The former had acquired, by his teaching and by his writings, the reputation of one of the most skillful dialecticians; he even abused dialectic, for, instead of seeing in it only what it really is, a simple means for arriving at the knowledge of truth, he regarded it almost as an end in itself, which naturally led to a kind of verbalism. It also seems that there was in him, whether in method or in the very substance of ideas, a search for originality that brings him somewhat close to modern philosophers; and, at a time when individualism was a thing almost unknown, this defect could not risk passing for a quality as happens nowadays. Thus some soon became concerned about these novelties, which tended to nothing less than to establish a true confusion between the domain of reason and

that of faith; it is not that Abelard was, properly speaking, a rationalist as has sometimes been claimed, for there were no rationalists before Descartes; but he did not know how to make the distinction between what pertains to reason and what is superior to it, between profane philosophy and sacred wisdom, between purely human knowledge and transcendent knowledge, and there is the root of all his errors. Did he not go so far as to maintain that philosophers and dialecticians enjoy a habitual inspiration that would be comparable to the supernatural inspiration of the prophets? One easily understands that Saint Bernard, when his attention was called to such theories, rose up against them with force and even with a certain vehemence, and also that he reproached their author bitterly for having taught that faith was only a simple opinion. The controversy between these two so different men, begun in private conversations, soon had an immense resonance in the schools and monasteries; Abelard, confident in his skill in handling reasoning, asked the archbishop of Sens to assemble a council before which he would justify himself publicly, for he thought to conduct the discussion in such a way that it would easily turn to the confusion of his adversary. Things went quite otherwise: the abbot of Clairvaux, in fact, conceived the council only as a tribunal before which the suspect theologian would appear as an accused; in a preparatory session, he produced Abelard's works and drew from them the most rash propositions, whose heterodoxy he proved; the next day, the author having been brought in, he summoned him, after having stated these propositions, to retract them or to justify them. Abelard, foreseeing then a condemnation, did not await the judgment of the council and immediately declared that he appealed to the court of Rome; the trial nevertheless continued its course, and, as soon as the condemnation was pronounced, Bernard wrote to Innocent II and to the cardinals letters of urgent eloquence, so that, six weeks later, the sentence was confirmed at Rome. Abelard had no choice but to submit; he took refuge at Cluny, with Peter the Venerable, who arranged for him an interview with the abbot of Clairvaux and succeeded in reconciling them.

The Council of Sens took place in 1140; in 1147, Bernard obtained likewise, at the Council of Reims, the condemnation of the errors of

Gilbert of la Porrée, the bishop of Poitiers, concerning the mystery of the Trinity; these errors arose from the fact that their author applied to God the real distinction of essence and existence, which is applicable only to created beings. Gilbert moreover retracted without difficulty; thus it was simply forbidden to read or to copy his work before it had been corrected; his authority, apart from the particular points that were at issue, was not affected, and his doctrine remained in great favor in the schools throughout the Middle Ages.

Two years before this last affair, the abbot of Clairvaux had had the joy of seeing one of his former monks, Bernard of Pisa, ascend the pontifical throne, taking the name Eugenius III, and continuing always to maintain with him the most affectionate relations; it was this new pope who, almost from the beginning of his reign, charged him with preaching the Second Crusade. Up to that point, the Holy Land had held, in appearance at least, only a rather small place in Saint Bernard's preoccupations; it would nevertheless be an error to believe that he had remained entirely foreign to what was happening there, and the proof is in a fact on which, ordinarily, one insists much less than would be appropriate. We mean the part he had taken in the constitution of the Order of the Temple, the first of the military Orders by date and by importance, the one that was to serve as a model for all the others. It was in 1128, about ten years after its foundation, that this Order received its rule at the Council of Troyes, and it was Bernard who, as secretary of the council, was charged with drafting it, or at least with sketching its first outlines, for it seems that it was only a little later that he was called upon to complete it, and that he did not finish its definitive drafting until 1131. He then commented on this rule in the treatise De laude novæ militiæ, where he set forth, in terms of magnificent eloquence, the mission and the ideal of Christian chivalry, of what he called the "militia of God." These relations of the abbot of Clairvaux with the Order of the Temple, which modern historians regard only as a rather secondary episode of his life, had assuredly a quite different importance in the eyes of medieval men; and we have shown elsewhere that they doubtless constitute the reason why Dante was to choose Saint Bernard as his guide in the ultimate circles of Paradise.

From 1145 onward, Louis VII had formed the project of going to the aid of the Latin principalities of the East, threatened by the emir of Aleppo; but the opposition of his counselors had forced him to postpone its realization, and the definitive decision had been referred to a plenary assembly that was to be held at Vézelay during the Easter feasts of the following year. Eugenius III, held in Italy by a revolution stirred up at Rome by Arnold of Brescia, charged the abbot of Clairvaux to replace him at this assembly; Bernard, after having read aloud the bull that summoned France to the crusade, delivered a discourse which was, to judge by the effect it produced, the greatest oratorical action of his life; all the assistants rushed to receive the cross from his hands. Encouraged by this success, Bernard traveled through cities and provinces, everywhere preaching the crusade with indefatigable zeal; where he could not go in person, he addressed letters no less eloquent than his speeches. He then went into Germany, where his preaching had the same results as in France; Emperor Conrad, after resisting for some time, had to yield to his influence and enlist in the crusade. Toward the middle of the year 1147, the French and German armies set out on this great expedition, which, in spite of their formidable appearance, was going to end in disaster. The causes of this failure were multiple; the principal ones seem to be the treachery of the Greeks and the lack of agreement among the various leaders of the crusade; but some, very unjustly, sought to lay the responsibility on the abbot of Clairvaux. He had to write a veritable apology for his conduct, which was at the same time a justification of the action of Providence, showing that the misfortunes that had occurred were imputable only to the faults of the Christians, and that thus “the promises of God remained intact, for they do not prescribe against the rights of his justice”; this apology is contained in the book De Consideratione, addressed to Eugenius III, a book that is like Saint Bernard’s testament and that contains in particular his views on the duties of the papacy. Moreover, not all gave way to discouragement, and Suger soon conceived the project of a new crusade, of which the abbot of Clairvaux himself was to be the leader; but the death of the great minister of Louis VII halted its execution. Saint Bernard himself died shortly thereafter, in 1153, and his last letters

testify that he was concerned to the end with the deliverance of the Holy Land.

If the immediate goal of the crusade had not been attained, must one therefore say that such an expedition was entirely useless and that Saint Bernard's efforts had been spent in pure loss? We do not believe so, despite what historians who cling to outward appearances might think, for there were, in these great medieval movements—political and religious at once—deeper reasons, one of which, the only one we wish to note here, was to maintain within Christendom a lively consciousness of its unity. Christendom was identical with Western civilization, founded then on essentially traditional bases, as is every normal civilization, and it was to reach its apogee in the thirteenth century; the loss of this traditional character had necessarily to follow the rupture of the very unity of Christendom. This rupture, accomplished in the religious domain by the Reformation, was accomplished in the political domain by the establishment of nationalities, preceded by the destruction of the feudal regime; and one can say, from this latter point of view, that the one who struck the first blows against the grand edifice of medieval Christendom was Philip the Fair—he who, by a coincidence that is assuredly not fortuitous, destroyed the Order of the Temple, thereby attacking directly the very work of Saint Bernard.

In the course of all his travels, Saint Bernard constantly supported his preaching by numerous miraculous healings, which were for the crowd like visible signs of his mission; these facts were reported by eyewitnesses, but he himself spoke of them only unwillingly. Perhaps this reserve was imposed on him by his extreme modesty; but doubtless also he attributed to these miracles only a secondary importance, considering them merely as a concession granted by divine mercy to the weakness of faith in most men, in accordance with Christ's words: "Blessed are those who will believe without having seen!" This attitude would accord with the disdain he generally manifests for all outward and sensible means, such as the pomp of ceremonies and the ornamentation of churches; one has even been able to reproach him, with some appearance of truth, for having had only contempt for

religious art. Those who formulate this criticism forget, however, a necessary distinction, that which he himself establishes between what he calls episcopal architecture and monastic architecture: it is this latter alone that must have the austerity he recommends; it is only to religious and to those who follow the path of perfection that he forbids the "worship of idols," that is, of forms, whose usefulness, as a means of education, he proclaims on the contrary for the simple and the imperfect. If he protested against the abuse of figures devoid of meaning and having only a purely ornamental value, he could not have wished, as has been falsely claimed, to proscribe the symbolism of architectural art, when he himself made very frequent use of it in his sermons.

The doctrine of Saint Bernard is essentially mystical; by this we mean that he envisages divine things above all under the aspect of love, which it would moreover be erroneous to interpret here in a merely affective sense as modern psychologists do. Like many great mystics, he was especially drawn to the Song of Songs, which he commented on in numerous sermons, forming a series that continues through almost his whole career; and this commentary, which always remained unfinished, describes all the degrees of divine love, up to the supreme peace that the soul reaches in ecstasy. The ecstatic state, as he understands it and as he certainly experienced it, is a kind of death to the things of this world; with sensible images, every natural feeling has disappeared; everything is pure and spiritual in the soul itself as in its love. This mysticism was naturally to be reflected in Saint Bernard's dogmatic treatises; the title of one of the principal ones, De diligendo Deo, sufficiently shows in fact what place love holds there; but one would be wrong to believe that this is at the expense of true intellectuality. If the abbot of Clairvaux always wished to remain foreign to the vain subtleties of the school, it is because he had no need of the laborious artifices of dialectic; he resolved in a single stroke the most arduous questions because he did not proceed by a long series of discursive operations; what philosophers strive to attain by an indirect route and as if by groping, he reached immediately, by the intellectual intuition without which no real metaphysics is possible, and outside of which one can grasp only a shadow of the truth.

A final trait of Saint Bernard's physiognomy, which it is essential still to signal, is the eminent place held, in his life and in his works, by devotion to the Blessed Virgin, and which gave rise to an entire flowering of legends, which are perhaps what has kept him most popular. He liked to give the Blessed Virgin the title of Notre-Dame ("Our Lady"), whose use became widespread since his time, and doubtless in large part thanks to his influence; for he was, as has been said, a true "knight of Mary," and he truly regarded her as his "lady," in the chivalric sense of this word. If one brings this fact together with the role played by love in his doctrine, and which it also played, under forms more or less symbolic, in the conceptions proper to the Orders of chivalry, one will easily understand why we took care to mention his family origins. Having become a monk, he always remained a knight, as all those of his race were; and, by that very fact, one can say that he was in a way predestined to play, as he did in so many circumstances, the role of intermediary, conciliator, and arbiter between religious power and political power, because there was in his person as it were a participation in the nature of both the one and the other. Monk and knight all at once, these two characters were those of the members of the "militia of God," of the Order of the Temple; they were also, and first of all, those of the author of their rule, of the great saint who has been called the last of the Fathers of the Church, and in whom some wish to see, not without some reason, the prototype of Galahad, the ideal and stainless knight, the victorious hero of the "quest of the Holy Grail."

APPENDIX A: PRAYER AND INCANTATION

We have just seen that there are cases where the distinction between the two domains, exoteric and esoteric, does not appear as absolutely sharp, by the very fact of the particular way in which certain traditional forms are constituted, and which establishes a sort of continuity between the one and the other; on the other hand, there are other cases where this distinction is perfectly clear, and it is notably so when exoterism takes on the specifically religious form. To give a precise and well-defined example of these latter cases, we shall consider the difference that exists between prayer, in the exoteric order, and, on the other hand, in the esoteric order, what we shall call "incantation," employing this term for lack of another clearer one that is lacking in the Western languages, and reserving for ourselves to define it exactly later. As for prayer, we must remark first of all that, although in ordinary usage this word is most often understood in a very vague sense, and one even sometimes goes so far as to take it as a synonym of the term "oration" in all its generality, we think that it is appropriate to keep for it, or restore to it, the much more special and restricted meaning that it holds from its very etymology, for this word "prayer" properly and exclusively signifies "request" and cannot, without abuse, be employed to designate anything else; one must therefore not forget that it is in this sole sense that we shall understand it in the course of the considerations that follow.

First of all, to indicate in what way one can understand prayer, let us consider any collectivity whatsoever, whether religious, or simply "social" in the most external sense, or even in the entirely profane sense in which this word is most habitually taken in our time[1]: each member of this collectivity is linked to it to a certain degree, determined by the extent of the sphere of action of the collectivity in question, and, to this same degree, he must logically participate in return in certain

1 Of course, the observation of the de facto existence of purely profane social organizations, that is to say deprived of any element presenting a traditional character, in no way implies the recognition of their legitimacy.

advantages—only material in certain cases (such as that of present-day nations, for example, or of the multiple kinds of associations based on a pure and simple solidarity of interests, and it goes without saying that these cases are properly, in a general way, those where one has to do with wholly profane organizations), but which can also, in other cases, relate to extra-corporeal modalities of the individual, that is to say to what one can, in its entirety, call the psychic domain (consolations or other favors of a sentimental order, and even sometimes of a higher order), or again, while being material, be obtained by means that are apparently immaterial—let us say more precisely by the intervention of elements not belonging to the corporeal order, but nevertheless acting directly upon it (the obtaining of a healing by prayer is a particularly clear example of this last case). In all this, we are speaking of the modalities of the individual only, for these advantages can never go beyond the individual domain, the only one that collectivities in fact reach whatever their character, which do not constitute initiatic organizations (the latter being, as we have already explained previously, the only ones that expressly have as their aim to go beyond this domain), and which concern themselves with contingencies and special applications presenting a practical interest from some point of view whatsoever, and not only, of course, in the most grossly "utilitarian" sense, to which only purely profane organizations are limited, whose field of action cannot extend farther than the corporeal domain.

One can therefore regard each collectivity as disposing, in addition to means of action that are purely material in the ordinary sense of the word, that is to say deriving solely from the corporeal order, of a force of a subtle order constituted in some way by the contributions of all its past and present members, and which, consequently, is all the more considerable and capable of producing effects all the more intense insofar as the collectivity is more ancient and is composed of a greater number of members[2]; it is moreover evident that this "quantitative" consideration indicates essentially that it is indeed a matter of the individual domain, beyond which it could no longer intervene in any

2 This can be true even for profane organizations, but it is evident that these can in any case make use of this force only unconsciously and for results of an exclusively corporeal order.

way whatsoever. Each of the members will be able, when he has need of it, to use for his own benefit a part of this force, and for that it will suffice for him to bring his individuality into harmony with the whole of the collectivity of which he is part, a result that he will obtain by conforming to the rules established by it and appropriate to the various circumstances that can present themselves; thus, if the individual then formulates a request, it is in sum, in the most immediate way at least, to what one could call the spirit of the collectivity (although the word "spirit" is assuredly improper in such a case, since, at bottom, it is only a psychic entity that is in question) that, consciously or not, he will address this request. However, it is appropriate to add that not everything is reduced solely to this in all cases: in that of collectivities belonging to an authentic and regular traditional form—a case that is notably that of religious collectivities—and where the observation of the rules of which we have just spoken consists more particularly in the accomplishment of certain rites, there is in addition the intervention of a truly "non-human" element, that is to say of what we have properly called a spiritual influence, but which must moreover be regarded here as "descending" into the individual domain, and as exercising its action there by means of the collective force in which it takes its support[3].

Sometimes, the force of which we have just spoken, or more exactly the synthesis of the spiritual influence with this collective force into which it "incorporates itself," so to speak, can be concentrated upon a "support" of a corporeal order, such as a determinate place or object, which plays the role of a true "condenser"[4], and there produce sensible manifestations, like those that the Hebrew Bible reports concerning the Ark of the Covenant and the Temple of Solomon; one could also cite here as examples, to one degree or another, places of pilgrimage, the tombs and relics of saints or of other persons venerated by the adherents of this or that traditional form. There lies the principal cause of the "miracles" that occur in the various religions, for these are facts whose

3 One may note that, in Christian doctrine, the role of spiritual influence corresponds to the action of "grace," and that of collective force to the "communion of saints."

4 In such cases, there is there a constitution comparable to that of a complete living being, with a "body" which is the "support" in question, a "soul" which is the collective force, and a "spirit" which is naturally the spiritual influence acting outwardly by means of the two other elements.

existence is incontestable and is not limited to a determinate religion; it goes without saying, moreover, that, in spite of the idea that is vulgarly held of them, these facts must not be considered as contrary to natural laws, any more than, from another point of view, the "supra-rational" must be taken for the "irrational." In reality, let us say it again, spiritual influences also have their laws, which, although of another order than those of natural forces (both psychic and corporeal), nonetheless are not without presenting with them certain analogies; thus it is possible to determine circumstances particularly favorable to their action, which can thereby be brought about and directed, if they possess the knowledge necessary for that purpose, by those who are their dispensers by reason of the functions with which they are invested in a traditional organization. It is important to note that the "miracles" of which we speak here are, in themselves and independently of their cause, which alone has a "transcendent" character, purely physical phenomena, perceptible as such by one or more of the five external senses; such phenomena are moreover the only ones that can be observed generally and indiscriminately by the whole mass of the people or of ordinary "believers," whose effective understanding does not extend beyond the limits of the corporeal modality of individuality.

The advantages that can be obtained by prayer and by the practice of the rites of a social or religious collectivity (rites common to all its members without exception, therefore of a purely exoteric order and obviously having no initiatic character, and insofar as they are not considered otherwise as being able to serve as a basis for a spiritual "realization") are essentially relative and contingent, but are nonetheless in no way negligible for the individual, who, as such, is himself relative and contingent; he would therefore be wrong to deprive himself of them voluntarily, if he is attached to some organization capable of procuring them for him. Thus, insofar as one must indeed take account of the nature of the human being as it in fact is, in the order of reality to which it belongs, it is in no way blameworthy, even for one who is something other than a simple "believer" (making here between "belief" and "knowledge" a distinction that corresponds in sum to that of exoterism and esoterism), to conform, with an interested end, thereby because he

is individual, and apart from any properly doctrinal consideration, to the external prescriptions of a religion or of a traditional legislation, provided that he attributes to what he thus expects from it only its just importance and the place that legitimately belongs to it, and provided also that the collectivity does not impose conditions, which, although commonly admissible, would constitute a true impossibility in fact in this particular case; under these sole reservations, prayer—whether it is addressed to the collective entity, or, through its intermediary, to the spiritual influence that acts through it—is perfectly licit, even in the eyes of the most rigorous orthodoxy in the domain of pure doctrine[5].

These considerations will make better understood, by the comparison that they allow one to establish, what we shall now say concerning "incantation"; and it is essential to note that what we thus call has absolutely nothing in common with the magical practices that are sometimes given the same name[6]; moreover, we have already explained ourselves sufficiently concerning magic for no confusion to be possible and for it not to be necessary to insist further. The incantation of which we speak, contrary to prayer, is not a request, and indeed it does not suppose the existence of any external thing (which every request necessarily supposes), because exteriority can be understood only in relation to the individual, which precisely it is here a question of surpassing; it is an aspiration of the being toward the Universal, in order to obtain what we could call, in a language of somewhat "theological" appearance, a spiritual grace, that is to say, at bottom, an inner illumination which, naturally, can be more or less complete according to the cases. Here, the action of spiritual influence must be envisaged in a pure state, if one can express oneself thus; the being, instead of seeking to make it descend upon him as he does in the case of prayer, tends on the contrary to raise himself toward it. This incantation, which is thus defined as an operation wholly interior in principle, can nevertheless, in

5 It is understood that "prayer" is in no way synonymous with "adoration"; one can very well ask benefits of someone without "divinizing" him in any way for that.

6 This word "incantation" has undergone in ordinary usage a degeneration similar to that of the word "charm," which is also commonly employed in the same acceptation, whereas the Latin carmen from which it derives designated, originally, poetry taken in its properly "sacred" sense; it is perhaps not without interest to note that this word carmen presents a close similarity with the Sanskrit karma, understood in the sense of "ritual action," as we have already said.

a great number of cases, be expressed and "supported" outwardly by words or gestures, constituting certain initiatic rites, such as the mantra in the Hindu tradition or the dhikr in the Islamic tradition, and which must be considered as determining rhythmic vibrations that have a repercussion through a more or less extended domain in the indefinite series of the states of being. Whether the result effectively obtained is more or less complete, as we were saying just now, the final goal to be attained is always the realization in oneself of the "Universal Man," by the perfect communion of the totality of the states, harmonically and conformably hierarchized, in integral blossoming in the two senses of "amplitude" and "exaltation," that is to say at once in the horizontal expansion of the modalities of each state and in the vertical superposition of the different states, according to the geometric representation that we have set forth elsewhere in detail[7].

This brings us to establish another distinction, by considering the various degrees to which one can attain according to the extent of the result obtained in tending toward this goal; and first of all, at the bottom and outside the hierarchy thus established, one must place the crowd of "profane," that is to say, in the sense in which this word must be taken here, all those who, like the simple believers of religions, can obtain actual results only in relation to their corporeal individuality, and within the limits of this portion or this special modality of individuality, since their effective consciousness goes neither farther nor higher than the domain contained within these restricted limits. Yet among these believers there are some, few in number moreover, who acquire something more (and this is the case of certain mystics, whom one could in this sense regard as more "intellectual" than the others): without leaving their individuality, but in "prolongations" of it, they perceive indirectly certain realities of a higher order, not as they are in themselves, but translated symbolically and clothed in psychic or mental forms. These are still phenomena (that is to say, in the etymological sense, appearances, always relative and illusory insofar as they are formal), but suprasensible phenomena, which are not observable for all, and which can bring to those who perceive them certain certainties,

7 See The Symbolism of the Cross.

always incomplete, fragmentary, and dispersed, but nonetheless superior to pure and simple belief that they replace; this result is moreover obtained passively, that is to say without intervention of the will, and by the ordinary means indicated by religions, in particular by prayer and the accomplishment of prescribed works, for all that does not yet leave the domain of exoterism.

At a much higher degree, and already deeply separated from that one, are placed those who, having extended their consciousness to the extreme limits of integral individuality, come to perceive directly the higher states of their being without however participating in them effectively; here, we are in the initiatic domain, but this initiation—real and effective as to the extension of individuality in its extra-corporeal modalities—is still only theoretical and virtual with regard to the higher states, since it does not actually result in the possession of them. It produces certainties incomparably more complete, more developed, and more coherent than in the preceding case, for it no longer belongs to the phenomenal domain; yet the one who acquires them can be compared to a man who knows light only by the rays that reach him (in the preceding case, he knew it only by reflections, or shadows projected in the field of his restricted individual consciousness, like the prisoners of Plato's symbolic cave), whereas, to know light perfectly in its intimate and essential reality, one must go back up to its source and identify oneself with this source itself[8]. This last case is the one that corresponds to the plenitude of real and effective initiation, that is to say to the conscious and voluntary taking possession of the totality of the states of being, in the two senses that we have indicated; that is the complete and final result of incantation, very different, as one sees, from all those that mystics can attain by prayer, for it is nothing other than the very perfection of metaphysical knowledge fully realized; the Yogî of the Hindu tradition, or the Çûfî of the Islamic tradition, if these terms are understood in their strict and true sense, is the one who has reached this supreme degree, and who has thus realized in his being the total possibility of the "Universal Man."

8 This is what the Islamic tradition designates as haqqul-yaqîn, whereas the preceding degree, which corresponds to "vision" without identification, is called aynul-yaqîn, and the first, that which simple believers can obtain with the help of exoteric traditional teaching, is ilmul-yaqîn.

APPENDIX B: THE SYMBOLISM OF THE CROSS[1]

We have shown, in our study on Prayer and Incantation[2], that the sign of the Cross symbolizes the integral blossoming of the being in the two senses of amplitude and exaltation, that is to say, the complete realization of the Universal Man[3]. This is why, moreover, the Kabbalah characterizes Adam Kadmon by the Quaternary, which is the number of Emanation, and which produces the Denary, the total manifestation of principial Unity, which it contained in potency, being itself the expansion of that Unity; the Quaternary in action is, in fact, represented by the Cross[4]. This clearly proves that the Cross is not only, as certain authors have claimed, "a symbol of the crucial junction formed by the ecliptic with the equator," and "an image of the equinoxes, when the Sun, in its annual course, successively covers these two points"[5]. It is that, no doubt, but it is also something quite other; and even, if it is that, it is because astronomical phenomena themselves must be considered as symbols, and because one can find in them, as in all things, and in particular in corporeal man, the likeness of the Universal Man, each of the parts of the Universe, world or individual being, being analogous to the Whole[6].

On the other hand, we have said that corporeal individuality is only a portion, a modality of integral individuality, and that the latter is susceptible of an indefinite development, manifesting itself in modalities whose number is likewise indefinite. Each modality is determined by a

1 [Not to be mistaken for the book of the same name. This essay was published by a young Guénon in La Gnose, 1911. It covers many of the same topics later expanded upon in the book.]

2 [Not the essay contained in this document as Appendix A, but an earlier version.]

3 See the note on p. 26 (2nd year, no. 1). — To complete what we said there concerning the rite of Communion, we may add this: Hierurgy or the Mass is, in reality, neither a prayer nor a magical act, but properly constitutes an incantation, in the sense that we have given to this word.

4 See our Remarks on the Production of Numbers (1st year, no. 8, p. 156).

5 Ragon, Ritual of the Degree of Rose-Croix, pp. 25 to 28.

6 As regards the astronomical meaning of the Cross, see the study on the Archeometer, in particular p. 187 (1st year, no. 9) and p. 245 (1st year, no. 11). — It is worth recalling that it is this interpretation, insufficient when taken exclusively, that gave rise to the all-too-famous theory of the "solar myth," reproduced to this day by the principal representatives of the "science of religions."

set of conditions, each of which, considered in isolation, can extend beyond the domain of this modality and then combine with different conditions to constitute the domains of other modalities forming part of the same integral individuality, each of these domains being able moreover to contain analogous modalities belonging to an indefinitude of other individuals, each of which, for its part, is a state of one of the beings of the Universe. The totality of the domains containing all the modalities of an individuality—domains which, as we have just said, are indefinite in number, and each of which is again indefinite—this totality, we say, constitutes a degree of Universal Existence, which, in its entirety, contains an indefinitude of individuals.

We can represent this degree of Existence by a horizontal plane, extending indefinitely according to two dimensions, which correspond to the two indefinitudes that we have here to consider: on the one hand, that of individuals, which one may represent by the set of straight lines parallel to one of the dimensions, defined, if one wishes, by the direction of the intersection of the horizontal plane with a vertical frontal plane; and, on the other hand, that of the domains particular to the different modalities of individuals, which will then be represented by the set of straight lines of the horizontal plane perpendicular to the preceding direction, that is to say, parallel to the visual or antero-posterior axis, whose direction defines the other dimension. Each of these two categories comprises an indefinitude of parallel straight lines, all indefinite; each point of the plane will be determined by the intersection of two straight lines belonging respectively to these two categories, and will therefore represent a particular modality of one of the individuals comprised in the degree considered.

Universal Existence, although one in itself, is multiple in its manifestations, and comprises an indefinitude of degrees, each of which may be represented, in a three-dimensional extension, by a horizontal plane. We have just seen that the section of such a plane by a vertical frontal plane represents an individual, or rather, to speak in a more general and at the same time more exact manner, a state of a being, a state which may be individual or non-individual, according to the

conditions of the degree of Existence to which it belongs. This vertical frontal plane may therefore be regarded as representing a being in its totality; this being comprises an indefinite number of states, then figured by all the horizontal straight lines of the plane, whose verticals are formed by the sets of modalities that correspond in all these states. Moreover, there is an indefinitude of such planes representing the indefinitude of beings contained in the total Universe.

One thus sees that, in this three-dimensional geometric representation, each modality of a state of being is indicated only by a point; it is nevertheless itself susceptible of developing in the course of a cycle of manifestation comprising an indefinitude of modifications: for the corporeal modality of our present human individuality, for example, these modifications will be all the moments of its existence, or, what amounts to the same thing, all the acts that it will perform in the course of this existence. To represent these modifications, it would be necessary to figure the modality considered, not by a point, but by an entire straight line, each point of which would be one of these modifications, taking good care to remark that this straight line, although indefinite, is limited, as indeed is every indefinite, and even, if one may so express it, every power of the indefinite. Simple indefinitude being represented by the straight line, double indefinitude, or the indefinite to the second power, will be represented by the plane, and triple indefinitude, or the indefinite to the third power, by three-dimensional extension. Thus, if each modality is figured by a straight line, a state of being, comprising a double indefinitude, will now be figured, in its entirety, by a horizontal plane, and a being, in its totality, by a three-dimensional extension.

In this new representation, more complete than the first, we see first of all that through each point of the extension considered pass three straight lines respectively parallel to its three dimensions; each point could therefore be taken as the vertex of a right trihedral angle, constituting a system of coordinates to which the whole extension would be referred, and whose three axes would form a three-dimensional cross. Suppose that the vertical axis of this system be determined; it will meet each horizontal plane at a point, which will be

the origin of the rectangular coordinates to which the plane will be referred, and whose two axes will form a two-dimensional cross. One may say that this point is the center of the plane and that the vertical axis is the locus of the centers of all the horizontal planes; every vertical, that is to say every parallel to this axis, also contains points that correspond in these same planes. If, in addition to the vertical axis, one determines a particular horizontal plane, the right trihedral of which we have just spoken will thereby also be determined. There will be a two-dimensional cross, formed by two of the three axes, in each of the three coordinate planes, one of which is the horizontal plane considered, and the two others of which are two orthogonal planes each passing through the vertical axis and through one of the two horizontal axes; and these three crosses will have as a common center the vertex of the trihedral, which is the center of the three-dimensional cross, and which one may also consider as the center of the extension. Each point could be center, and one may say that it is so in potency; but, in fact, a particular point must be determined—we shall say how later—in order that one may draw the cross, that is to say, measure the whole extension, or, analogically, realize the total comprehension of the being.

In this new three-dimensional representation, where we have considered only one being, the horizontal direction along which the modalities of all the states of this being develop implies, as do the vertical planes that are parallel to it, an idea of logical succession, while the vertical planes perpendicular to it correspond, correlatively, to the idea of logical simultaneity. If one projects the whole extension onto that one of the three coordinate planes which is in this latter case, each modality of each state of being will project as a point of a horizontal straight line, and the state whose center coincides with that of the total being will be figured by the horizontal axis situated in the plane onto which the projection is made. We are thus brought back to our first representation, that in which the being is situated in a vertical plane; a horizontal plane may then once again be a degree of Universal Existence, comprising the entire development of a particular possibility, whose manifestation constitutes, taken as a whole, what one may call a Macrocosm, while, in the other representation, it is only the development of this same

possibility in a being, which constitutes a state of that being, integral individuality or non-individual state, which one may, in all cases, call a Microcosm. But the Macrocosm itself, like the Microcosm, is, when envisaged in isolation, only one of the elements of the Universe, just as each particular possibility is only an element of total Possibility.

That one of the two representations which relates to the Universe may be called, to simplify language, the macrocosmic representation, and that which relates to a being, the microcosmic representation. We have seen how, in this latter, the three-dimensional cross is traced: it will be the same in the macrocosmic representation, if one determines there the corresponding elements, that is to say a vertical axis, which will be the axis of the Universe, and a horizontal plane, which one may designate, by analogy, as its equator; and we must remark that each Macrocosm here has its center on the vertical axis, just as each Microcosm had in the other representation.

One sees, from what has just been set forth, the analogy that exists between the Macrocosm and the Microcosm, each part of the Universe being analogous to the other parts, and its own parts being analogous to it also, because all are analogous to the total Universe, as we said at the beginning. It results from this that, if we consider the Macrocosm, each of the defined domains that it comprises is analogous to it; likewise, if we consider the Microcosm, each of its modalities is also analogous to it. Thus it is that, in particular, the corporeal or physical modality of our present human individuality can symbolize this same individuality envisaged integrally, if one makes its three parts—head, chest, and abdomen—correspond respectively to the three elements of which individuality is composed: pneumatic or intellectual element, psychic or emotive element, hylic or material element[7]. This is the most general division of individuality, and one could apply it to the Macrocosm as to the Microcosm, according to the law of analogies; but one must not forget that each of these three elements comprises an indefinite number of coexistent modalities, just as each of the three parts of the body is

7 See, in the study on the Archeometer (2nd year, no. 1, p. 17), the correspondence of these same elements of individuality with the divisions of human society, which may be regarded as a collective individuality, and as one of the analogues, in the Macrocosm, of what one of its modalities is in the Microcosm.

composed of an indefinite number of cells, each of which also has its own proper existence.

This being established, if we consider a state of being, figured by a horizontal plane of the microcosmic representation, it remains for us now to say to what correspond the center of this plane, as well as the vertical axis that passes through this center. But, to arrive at this, we shall have to have recourse once more to another geometric representation, a little different from the preceding one, and in which we shall bring into play, no longer only, as we have done up to now, parallelism or correspondence, but also the continuity of all the modalities of each state of being among themselves, and also of all the states of being among themselves, in the constitution of the total being.

Instead of representing the different modalities of a same state of being by parallel straight lines, as we have done previously, we can represent them by concentric circles traced in the same horizontal plane, and having as a common center the very center of this plane, that is to say, according to what we have established, its point of intersection with the vertical axis. In this way, one clearly sees that each modality is finite, limited, since it is figured by a circumference, which is a closed curve; but, on the other hand, this circumference is formed of an indefinite number of points, representing the indefinitude of the modifications that the modality considered comprises. Moreover, the concentric circles must leave no interval between them, save the infinitesimal distance of two immediately neighboring points (we shall return a little later to this question), so that their totality comprises all the points of the plane, which supposes that there is continuity between all these circles; but, for there truly to be continuity, the end of each circumference must coincide with the beginning of the following circumference, and, for this to be possible without the two successive circumferences being confused, it is necessary that these circumferences, or rather the curves that we have considered as such, be in reality non-closed curves.

Moreover, we can go further: it is materially impossible to trace a closed curve, and, to prove it, it suffices to remark that, in the space where our

corporeal modality is situated, everything is always in motion (by the combination of the conditions of space and time), in such a way that, if we wish to trace a circle, and if we begin this tracing at a certain point of space, we shall find ourselves at another point when we complete it, and we shall never pass again through the point of departure. Likewise, the curve that symbolizes the course of any cycle of evolution whatsoever must never pass twice through the same point, which amounts to saying that it must not be a closed curve (nor a curve containing multiple points). This representation shows that there cannot be two identical possibilities in the Universe, which would moreover amount to a limitation of total Possibility, an impossible limitation, since, having to comprise Possibility, it could not itself be comprised within it[8]. Two possibilities that were identical would differ by none of their conditions; but, if all the conditions are the same, it is also the same possibility, and this reasoning can be applied to all the points of our representation, each of these points figuring a particular modification that realizes a determinate possibility[9].

The beginning and the end of any one of the circumferences that we have to consider are therefore not the same point, but two consecutive points of a same radius, and, in reality, they do not belong to the same circumference: one belongs to the preceding circumference, of which it is the end, and the other to the following circumference, of which it is the beginning; this can be applied, in particular, to the birth and death of our corporeal modality. Thus, the two extreme modifications of each modality do not coincide, but there is simply correspondence between them in the totality of the state of being of which this modality forms part, this correspondence being indicated by the situation of their representative points on a same radius issuing from the center of the plane. Consequently, the same radius will contain the extreme modifications of all the modalities of the state of being considered, modalities which moreover must not be regarded as successive in the

8 A limitation of Universal Possibility is, in the proper sense of the word, an impossibility; we shall see elsewhere that this excludes the theory of reincarnation, just as much as Nietzsche's "eternal return," and the simultaneous repetition, in space, of supposedly identical individuals, as imagined by Blanqui.

9 We are considering here possibility in its most restricted and most specialized sense; it is a question not of a particular possibility susceptible of an indefinite development, but only of one of the elements comprised within that development.

strict sense (for they can just as well be simultaneous), but simply as being logically linked together. The curves that figure these modalities, instead of being circumferences as we had at first supposed, are the successive spires of an indefinite spiral traced in the horizontal plane; from one spire to the other, the radius varies by an infinitesimal quantity, which is the distance of two consecutive points of this radius, a distance that it is moreover impossible to consider as null, since the two points are not confounded.

One may say that this distance of two immediately neighboring points is the limit of extension in the sense of indefinitely decreasing quantities; it is the smallest possible extension, beyond which there is no longer extension, that is to say no longer spatial condition. Thus, when one divides extension indefinitely (but not to infinity, which would be an absurdity, divisibility being necessarily a quality proper to a limited domain, since the spatial condition, on which it depends, is itself limited), it is not the point that one reaches; it is the elementary distance between two points, from which it results that, for there to be extension or spatial condition, there must be two points, and extension (in one dimension) or distance is the third element that unites these two points. However, the primordial element, that which exists by itself, is the point: one may say that it contains a potentiality of extension, which it can develop only by first doubling itself, then multiplying itself indefinitely, in such a way that manifested extension proceeds from its differentiation (or, more exactly, from it insofar as it differentiates itself). The point, considered in itself, is not subject to the spatial condition; on the contrary, it is it that realizes space, that creates extension by its act, which, in the temporal condition, is translated by movement; but, to realize space, it must itself situate itself in this space, which it will fill entirely with the deployment of its potentialities. It can, successively in the temporal condition, or simultaneously outside this condition (which would moreover take us outside ordinary three-dimensional space), identify itself, in order to realize them, with all the virtual points of this extension, the latter being envisaged statically as the total potentiality of the point, the place or the container of the manifestations of its activity. The point that realizes all extension as we

have just indicated makes itself its center, by measuring it in all its dimensions, by the indefinite extension of the branches of the Cross toward the cardinal points of this extension; it is the Universal Man, but not the individual man (the latter being able to reach nothing outside his own state of being), who is, according to the word of a Greek philosopher, the measure of all things. We shall have to return, in another study, to the question of the limitations of the spatial condition (as well as of the other conditions of corporeal existence), and we shall then show how, from the remark that we have just made, the demonstration of the absurdity of atomistic theory is deduced.

Let us return to the new geometric representation that has led us into this digression: it is to be remarked that it amounts to replacing the rectangular coordinates of the horizontal plane of our preceding microcosmic representation by polar coordinates. Every variation of the radius corresponds to an equivalent variation on the axis traversing all the modalities, that is to say perpendicular to the direction along which the course of each modality was effected. As for the variations on the axis parallel to this latter direction, they are replaced by the different positions that the radius occupies by turning around the pole, that is to say by the variations of its angle of rotation, measured from a certain position taken as origin. This position, which will be the normal at the departure of the spiral (the latter departing from the center tangentially to the perpendicular position of the radius), will be that of the radius that contains, as we have said, the extreme modifications (beginning and end) of all the modalities.

But, in these modalities, it is not only the beginning and the end that correspond, and each modification or element of a modality has its correspondence in all the other modalities, the corresponding modifications always being represented by points situated on a same radius. If one were to take this radius, whatever it may be, as normal to the origin of the spiral, one would always have the same spiral, but the figure would have turned through a certain angle. To represent the perfect continuity that exists between all the modalities, it would be necessary to suppose that the figure occupies simultaneously all the

possible positions around the pole, all these similar figures interpenetrating, since each of them comprises all the points of the plane; it is only one and the same figure in an indefinitude of different positions, positions which correspond to the indefinitude of the values of the angle of rotation, supposing that this latter varies in a continuous manner until the radius, after a complete revolution, has returned to superpose itself on its first position. One would then have the exact image of a vibratory movement propagating indefinitely, in concentric waves, around its point of departure, in a horizontal plane such as the free surface (theoretical) of a liquid; and this would also be the most exact geometric symbol that we could give of the integrality of a state of being. We could even show that the realization of this integrality would correspond to the integration of the differential equation expressing the relation that exists between the corresponding variations of the radius and of its angle of rotation, both varying in a continuous manner, that is to say by infinitesimal quantities. The arbitrary constant that figures in the integral would be determined by the position of the radius taken as origin, and this same quantity, which is constant only for a determined position of the figure, would have to vary in a continuous manner from 0 to 2π for all its positions, so that, if one considers these as able to be simultaneous (which amounts to suppressing the temporal condition, which gives to the activity of manifestation the form of movement), one must leave the constant undetermined between these two extreme values.

However, one must take great care to remark that these geometric representations are always imperfect, as indeed is every representation; in fact, we are obliged to situate them in a particular space, in a determined extension, and space, even envisaged in all its extension, is only a condition contained in one of the degrees of Universal Existence, and to which (moreover united to other conditions) are subject certain of the multiple domains comprised in this degree of Existence, domains of which each is, in the Macrocosm, what in the Microcosm is the corresponding modality of the state of being situated in this same degree. Representation is necessarily imperfect, by the very fact that it is enclosed within limits more restricted than that which is represented (if

it were otherwise, it would be useless)[10]; but it is the less imperfect insofar as, while remaining within the limits of what is presently conceivable, it nevertheless becomes less limited, which amounts to saying that it brings into play a higher power of the indefinite[11]. This is translated, in spatial representations, by the addition of a dimension; moreover, this question will be further clarified in what follows.

But, in our new representation, we have up to now considered only a horizontal plane, and we must now figure the continuity of all the horizontal planes, which represent the indefinite multiplicity of the states of being. This continuity will be obtained geometrically in an analogous manner: instead of supposing the horizontal plane fixed in three-dimensional extension (a hypothesis which the fact of movement renders as materially unrealizable as the tracing of a closed curve), one supposes that it moves imperceptibly, parallel to itself, so as to meet successively the vertical axis at all its consecutive points, the passage from one point to another corresponding to the course of one of the spires that we have considered (the spiroïdal movement being supposed isochronous, to simplify the representation, and, at the same time, to translate the equivalence of the multiple modalities of the being in each of its states, when one envisages them in Universality). We can even, for greater simplicity, again and provisionally consider each of these spires as we had already envisaged it at first in the fixed horizontal plane, that is to say as a circumference. Once again, the circumference will not close, for, when the radius that describes it comes back to superpose itself on itself (or rather on its initial position), it will no longer be in the same horizontal plane (supposed fixed as parallel to a coordinate direction and marking the situation on the axis perpendicular to this direction); the elementary distance that will separate the two extremities of this circumference, or rather of the curve supposed to be such, will be measured, no longer on a radius issuing from the pole, but on a parallel

10 This is why the superior cannot symbolize the inferior, but is, on the contrary, always symbolized by it, as Saint-Martin moreover shows in chapter X of the Tableau Naturel; and this suffices to overturn Dupuis's astro-mythological theory. — Let us add that, according to the law of analogy, the inferior, that is to say the symbol, is always inverted in relation to the superior or to that which is symbolized.

11 In infinitesimal quantities there is something that corresponds (in the inverse sense) to these (increasing) powers of the indefinite: these are what are called the different (decreasing) orders of infinitesimal quantities.

to the vertical axis. These extreme points do not belong to the same horizontal plane, but to two superposed horizontal planes, because they mark the continuity of each state of being with that which precedes it and that which immediately follows it in the hierarchization of the total being. If one considers the radii that contain the extremities of the modalities of all the states of being, their superposition forms a vertical plane of which they are the horizontal straight lines, and this vertical plane is the locus of all the extreme points of which we have just spoken, and which one might call limit-points for the different states of being, just as they were previously, from another point of view, for the various modalities of each state of being. The curve that we had provisionally considered as a circumference is in reality a spire, of infinitesimal height, of a helix traced on a cylinder of revolution whose axis is none other than the vertical axis of our representation. The correspondence between the points of successive spires is here marked by their situation on a same generatrix of the cylinder, that is to say on a same vertical; the corresponding points, through the multiplicity of the states of being, appear confounded when one envisages them, in the totality of three-dimensional extension, in vertical projection onto a base plane of the cylinder, that is to say, in other terms, in orthogonal projection onto a determined horizontal plane.

To complete our representation, it suffices now to envisage simultaneously, on the one hand, this helical movement, taking place on a vertical cylindrical system constituted by an indefinitude of concentric circular cylinders (the base radius varying from one to the other only by an infinitesimal quantity), and, on the other hand, the spiroïdal movement that we have considered previously in each horizontal plane supposed fixed. Consequently, the planar base of the vertical system will be none other than the horizontal spiral equivalent to an indefinitude of non-closed concentric circumferences; but, in addition, to push further the analogy of the considerations relating respectively to two- and three-dimensional extensions, and also to better symbolize the perfect continuity of all the states of being among themselves, it will be necessary to envisage the spiral, not in a single position, but in all the positions that it can occupy around its center, which gives an

indefinitude of vertical systems such as the preceding one, having the same axis, and all interpenetrating when one regards them as coexistent, since each of them comprises all the points of a same three-dimensional extension in which they are all situated; it is only the same system considered simultaneously in all the positions that it occupies in accomplishing a rotation around the vertical axis.

We shall see, however, that, in reality, the analogy is not yet entirely complete in this way; but, before going further, let us remark that all that we have just said could apply to the macrocosmic representation as well as to the microcosmic representation. Then, the successive spires of the indefinite spiral traced in a horizontal plane, instead of representing the various modalities of a state of being, would represent the multiple domains of a degree of Universal Existence, while the vertical correspondence would be that of each degree of Existence, in each of the determinate possibilities of being that it comprises, with all the other degrees. This concordance between the two representations (macrocosmic and microcosmic) will moreover also be true for all that follows.

If we return to the complex vertical system that we have considered last, we see that, around the point taken as center of the three-dimensional extension filled by this system, this extension is not isotropic, or, in other terms, that, as a result of the determination of a particular direction, which is that of the axis of the system, that is to say the vertical direction, the figure is not homogeneous in all directions starting from this point. On the contrary, in the horizontal plane, when we considered simultaneously all the positions of the spiral around the center, this plane was envisaged in a homogeneous manner and under an isotropic aspect with respect to this center. For it to be the same in three-dimensional extension, one must remark that every straight line passing through the center could be taken as axis of a system such as that of which we have just spoken, so that every direction can play the role of the vertical; likewise, every plane that passes through the center being perpendicular to one of these straight lines, it results that every direction of planes can play the role of the horizontal direction, and even that of

the direction parallel to any one of the three coordinate planes. In fact, every plane passing through the center can become one of these three planes in an indefinitude of right trihedral coordinate systems, for it contains an indefinitude of pairs of orthogonal straight lines intersecting at the center (these are all the radii issuing from the pole in the figuration of the spiral), which can all form any two of the three axes of one of these systems. Just as each point of the extension is center in potency, every straight line of this same extension is axis in potency, and, even when the center shall have been determined, every straight line passing through this point will still be, in potency, any one of the three axes; when one shall have chosen the central (or principal) axis of a system, it will remain to fix the two other axes in the plane perpendicular to the first and also passing through the center; but here too, the three axes must be determined in order that the Cross may be effectively traced, that is to say, in order that the whole extension may be truly measured according to its three dimensions.

One may envisage as coexistent (for they are indeed so in the potential state, and, moreover, this in no way prevents subsequently choosing three determinate coordinate axes, to which one will refer the whole extension) all the systems such as our vertical representation, having respectively as central axes all the straight lines passing through the center; here again, these are in reality only the different positions of the same system, when its axis takes all possible directions around the center, and they interpenetrate for the same reason as previously, that is to say because each of them comprises all the points of the extension. One may say that it is the point-principle of which we have spoken (representing the being in itself) that creates or realizes this extension, until then virtual (as a pure possibility of development), by filling the total volume, indefinite to the third power, by the complete expansion of its potentialities in all directions[12]. Since, with this new consideration, all these directions play the same role, the deployment that is effected starting from the center can be regarded as spherical, or better spheroidal: the total volume is a spheroid that extends indefinitely in all

12 Perfect homogeneity is obtained precisely in the fullness of expansion; on this correlation, see Pages dedicated to the Sun, 2nd year, no. 2, p. 61.

directions, and whose surface does not close, any more than the curves that we have described previously; moreover, the plane spiral, envisaged simultaneously in all its positions, is nothing other than a section of this surface by a plane passing through the center. We have seen that the realization of the integrality of a plane was translated by the calculation of a simple integral; here, since it is a matter of a volume and no longer of a surface, the realization of the totality of extension would be translated by the calculation of a double integral[13]; the two arbitrary constants that would be introduced into this calculation could be determined by the choice of two coordinate axes, the third axis being thereby fixed. We must still remark that the deployment of this spheroid is, in sum, only the indefinite propagation of a vibratory (or undulatory) movement, no longer only in a horizontal plane, but in the whole three-dimensional extension, whose point of departure of this movement may presently be regarded as the center; and, if one considers this extension as a geometric (that is to say spatial) symbol of total Possibility (a necessarily imperfect symbol, since limited), the representation to which we have thus arrived will be the figuration of the Way, the "universal spherical vortex"[14].

But to insist at greater length on these considerations and to give them here all the development that they could comprise would carry us too far from the subject that we have at present set ourselves to treat, and from which, up to now, we have moreover departed only in appearance. That is why, after having pushed to its extreme conceivable limits the universalization of our geometric symbol, by introducing into it gradually, in several successive phases (or at least presented successively in our exposition), an ever greater indetermination (corresponding to what we have called increasingly higher powers of the indefinite, but nevertheless without going outside three-dimensional extension), that is why, we say, we must now in a way retrace the same path in the opposite direction, in order to restore to the figure the determination of all its elements, determination without which, while

13 One point that must be borne in mind is that an integral can never be calculated by taking its elements one by one, analytically; integration can only be effected by a single synthetic operation; this once again shows that, as we have already said on several occasions, analysis can in no case lead to synthesis.

14 See Matgioi's note placed after our Remarks on the Production of Numbers (1st year, no. 9, p. 194)

existing in potency of being, it cannot be effectively traced. But this determination, which at our point of departure was only hypothetical (that is to say envisaged as a pure possibility), will now become real, for we shall be able to mark the significance of each of the constitutive elements of the crucial symbol.

First of all, we shall envisage, not the universality of beings, but a single being in its totality; we shall suppose that the vertical axis be determined, and then that the plane passing through this axis and containing the extreme points of the modalities of each state of being be likewise determined; we shall thus return to the vertical system having as planar base the horizontal spiral considered in a single position, a system that we had already described previously. Here, the directions of the three coordinate axes are determined, but the vertical axis alone is effectively determined in position; one of the two horizontal axes will be situated in the vertical plane of which we have just spoken, and the other will naturally be perpendicular to it; but the horizontal plane that will contain these two rectangular straight lines still remains undetermined. If we were to determine it, we would thereby also determine the center of the extension, that is to say the origin of the coordinate system to which this extension is referred, since this point is none other than the intersection of the horizontal coordinate plane with the vertical axis; all the elements of the figure would then be effectively determined, which would allow one to trace the three-dimensional Cross, measuring the extension in its totality.

We must still recall that we had had to consider, in order to constitute our representative system of the total being, first a horizontal spiral, and then a vertical cylindrical helix. If we consider in isolation any spire whatsoever of such a helix, we can, by neglecting the elementary difference of level between its extremities, regard it as a circumference traced in a horizontal plane; one may likewise take for a circumference each spire of the other curve, the horizontal spiral, if one neglects the elementary variation of the radius between its extremities. Consequently, any circumference traced in a horizontal plane and having as center the very center of this plane (that is to say its

intersection with the vertical axis) can, with the same approximations, be envisaged as a spire belonging at once to a vertical helix and to a horizontal spiral[15]; it results from this that the curve that we represent as a circumference is, in reality, neither closed nor plane.

Such a circumference will represent any modality whatsoever of any state of being whatsoever, envisaged according to the direction of the vertical axis, which will itself project horizontally as a point, center of the circumference. If one were to envisage it according to the direction of one or the other of the two horizontal axes, it would project as a segment, symmetrical with respect to the vertical axis, of a horizontal straight line forming the cross (two-dimensional) with the latter, this horizontal straight line being the trace, on the vertical plane of projection, of the plane in which the circumference considered is traced.

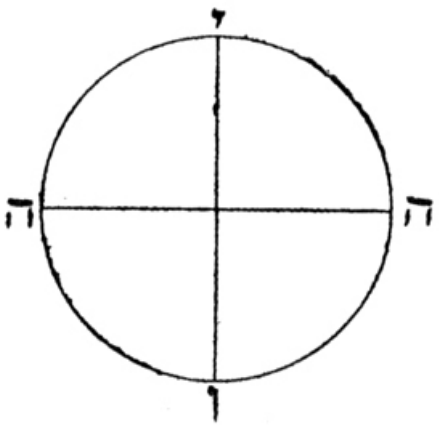
The circumference with the central point is the figure of the Denary, envisaged as the complete development of Unity, as we have seen in a previous study[16]; the center and the circumference correspond respectively to the two active and passive principles (Being and its Possibility), represented also by the two digits 1 and 0 that form the number 10. It is to be remarked, on the other hand, that, in Chinese numeration, the same number is represented by the cross, whose vertical bar and horizontal bar correspond respectively (as in the cruciform figuration of the Hebrew Tetragrammaton יהוה)[17] to the same two active

15 This circumference is the same thing as that which bounds the figure of the Yin-yang (see below).

16 Remarks on the Production of Numbers, 1st year, no. 9, p. 193.

17 See the figure on p. 172 (1st year, no. 8).

[This figure was published in the article by Marnès entitled Commentary on the Natural Tableau of Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin, 1st year, no. 8, p. 172, with the following commentary: "In the Principle, Adam-Kadmôn, or the Universal Man, is represented by the sacred quaternary, corresponding to the four letters of the Tetragrammaton יהוה; if one draws a circle and inscribes within it a cross at the extremities of which one places each of the four letters of the Tetragrammaton, one then has the exact representation of the man-principle, whose vertical and horizontal dimensions are restored and whose center is constituted by the navel."]



and passive principles, or masculine and feminine. We have moreover, in the same study[18], also indicated the relation that exists between the Quaternary and the Denary, or between the cross and the circumference, and which is expressed by the equation of the "quadrature of the quadrant":

$1 + 2 + 3 + 4 = 10$[19]

From this, we already deduce that, in our geometric representation, the horizontal plane (which is supposed fixed, and which, as we have said, is arbitrary) will play a passive role with respect to the vertical axis, which amounts to saying that the corresponding state of being will be realized in its integral development under the action of the principle that is represented by the axis; this will be much better understood later, but it was important to indicate it from now on. We see at the same time that the Cross does indeed symbolize, as has been said quite often, the union of the two complementary principles, the masculine and the feminine; but here again, as when it was a matter of the astronomical signification, we must repeat that this interpretation, if it were to become exclusive and systematic, would be at once insufficient and false; it must be only a particular case of the symbolism of the "union of contrasts and antinomies"[20]. With this restriction, one may regard the Cross (just as the circumference with the central point), from a certain point of view, as the equivalent of the symbol that unites the Linga and the Yoni; but it is understood that this symbol must be taken in a purely spiritual acceptation, as it is among the Hindus[21], and not in the sense of a gross naturalism, which is totally foreign to Oriental conceptions.

To return to the determination of our figure, we have in sum to consider particularly only two things: on the one hand, the vertical axis, and, on the other hand, the horizontal coordinate plane. We know that a horizontal plane represents a state of being, of which each modality

18 Ibid., 1st year, no. 8, p. 156.

19 See also chapter XVIII of the Tableau Naturel by L.-Cl. de Saint-Martin, where further considerations on this subject will be found, envisaged from a different point of view.

20 See Pages dedicated to the Sun, 2nd year, no. 2, pp. 60 and 61.

21 This is one of the principal symbols of Shaivism.

corresponds to a planar spire that we have confounded with a circumference; on the other hand, the extremities of this spire, in reality, are not contained in the plane of the curve, but in two immediately neighboring planes, for this same curve, envisaged in the vertical cylindrical system, is "a spire, a function of a helix, but whose pitch is infinitesimal. That is why, given that we live, act, and reason at present upon contingencies, we can and even must consider the graph of individual evolution[22] as a surface. And, in reality, it possesses all the attributes and qualities of a surface, and differs from the surface only when considered from the Absolute[23]. Thus, for our plane, the 'circulus vital' is an immediate truth, and the circle is indeed the representation of the human individual cycle."[24] But, of course, "one must never lose sight of the fact that, if, taken separately, the Yin-yang[25] may be considered as a circle, it is, in the succession of individual modifications[26], an element of a helix: every individual modification is essentially a three-dimensional 'vortex'; there is only one human (individual) stasis, and one never passes again by the path already traveled."[27]

The two extremities of the spire of the helix of infinitesimal pitch are, as we have said, two immediately neighboring points on a generatrix of the cylinder, a parallel to the vertical axis (moreover situated in one of the coordinate planes). These two points do not belong to the individual, or, more generally, to the state of being represented by the horizontal plane that one considers. "Entrance into the Yin-yang and exit from the Yin-yang are not at the disposal of the individual; for these are two points which belong, although to the Yin-yang, to the spire of the helix inscribed on the lateral surface of the cylinder, and which are subject to the attraction of the Will of Heaven. And, in reality, indeed, man is not free in his birth nor in his death[28]… He is free in none of the conditions

22 Either for a particular modality of the individual, or by envisaging the integral individuality in isolation within being; when only a single state is considered, the representation must be plane.

23 By envisaging being in its totality.

24 Matgioi, The Metaphysical Way, p. 128.

25 The cyclical symbol of individual evolution.

26 Considered simultaneously in the different states of being.

27 Ibid., p. 131, note.

28 Ibid., p. 132.

of these two acts: birth launches him irresistibly upon the circulus of an existence that he has neither asked for nor chosen; death removes him from this circulus and launches him irresistibly into another, prescribed and foreseen by the Will of Heaven, without his being able to modify anything in it. Thus, terrestrial man is a slave with respect to his birth and with respect to his death, that is to say with regard to the two principal acts of his individual life, the only ones which in sum summarize his special evolution in regard to the Infinite."[29]

Consequently, the pitch of the helix, the element by which the extremities of an individual cycle escape the domain of the individual, is the mathematical measure of "the attractive force of the Divinity"[30]; the action of the Will of Heaven in the evolution of the being is therefore measured parallel to the vertical axis. This axis then represents the metaphysical locus of the manifestation of the Will of Heaven, and it traverses each horizontal plane at its center, that is to say at the point where the equilibrium in which this manifestation resides is realized, or, in other terms, the complete harmonization of all the constitutive elements of the corresponding state of being: this is the Invariable Middle, in which is reflected, in manifesting itself, the supreme Unity, which, in itself, is Active Perfection, the unmanifested Will of Heaven[31]. We can therefore say that the vertical axis is the symbol of the personal Way, which leads to Perfection, and which is a specialization of the universal Way, represented previously by a spheroidal figure; this specialization is obtained, according to what we have said, by the determination of a particular direction in extension.

This axis is therefore determined as expression of the Will of Heaven in the total evolution of the being, which determines at the same time the direction of the horizontal planes representing the different states of being, and the horizontal and vertical correspondence of these, establishing their hierarchization. As a result of this correspondence, the

29 Ibid., p. 133 — But between his birth and his death, the individual is free, in the emission and in the direction of all his earthly acts; in the circulus vital of the species and of the individual, the attraction of the Will of Heaven is not felt.

30 Ibid., p. 95.

31 On the Invariable Middle (Tchoung-young), see Remarks on Mathematical Notation, 1st year, no. 7, p. 142.

limit-points of these states of being are determined as extremities of the particular modalities; the vertical plane that contains them is one of the coordinate planes, as is that which is perpendicular to it along the axis; these two vertical planes trace in each horizontal plane a (two-dimensional) cross, whose center is in the Invariable Middle. There thus remains only a single indeterminate element: it is the position of the particular horizontal plane that will be the third coordinate plane; to this plane corresponds, in the total being, a certain state, the determination of which will allow one to trace the symbolic three-dimensional Cross, that is to say to realize the very totalization of the being.

Let us remark in passing that one could explain thereby the saying of the Gospel according to which the Word (the Will of Heaven in action) is (with respect to us) "the Way, the Truth, and the Life." If we take up again for a moment our microcosmic representation from the beginning, and if we consider its three coordinate axes, the "Way" will be represented, as here, by the vertical axis; of the two horizontal axes, one will represent "Truth," and the other "Life." While the "Way" relates to the Universal Man (מדא), with whom the Self is identified, "Truth" relates to the intellectual man (שיא), and "Life" to the corporeal man (שנא); of these latter two, which belong to the domain of a particular state of being (that in which we are presently), the first must here be assimilated to integral individuality, of which the other is only a modality. "Life" will therefore be represented by the axis parallel to the direction along which each modality develops, and "Truth" by the axis that unites all the modalities by traversing them perpendicularly to this same direction. This supposes, moreover, that the tracing of the three-dimensional Cross is referred to terrestrial human individuality, for it is only with respect to this that we have here considered "Life" and "Truth"; this tracing figures the action of the Word in the realization of the total being and its identification with the Universal Man.

If we consider the superposition of the horizontal planes representative of all the states of being, we can further say that the vertical axis symbolizes, with respect to these, envisaged separately or as a whole, the Celestial Ray "which constitutes the superior non-incarnated

element of man, and which serves him as guide through the phases of universal evolution"[32]. The universal cycle, represented by the totality of our figure, and "of which humanity (in the individual sense) constitutes only a phase, has a proper movement[33], independent of our humanity, of all humanities, of all planes, of which it forms the indefinite Sum (which is the Universal Man). This proper movement, which it holds from the essential affinity of the Celestial Ray toward its origin, irresistibly points it toward its End, which is identical to its Beginning, with an ascensional and divinely beneficent directive force. This is what Gnosis knows under the name of the Redemptive Way."[34]

The Celestial Ray traverses all the states of being, marking the central point of each of them by its trace on the corresponding plane, as we have already said[35]; but this action is effective only if it produces, by its reflection on one of these planes, a vibration which, propagating and amplifying itself in the totality of the being, illumines its chaos, cosmic or human. We say cosmic or human, for this can apply to the Macrocosm as well as to the Microcosm; the plane of reflection, whose center (point of incidence of the Celestial Ray) will be the point of departure of this indefinite vibration, will then be the central plane in the totality of the states of being, that is to say the horizontal coordinate plane in our geometric representation, and it is this central plane, where the horizontal branches of the Cross are traced, which is represented in all traditions as the surface of the Great Waters[36]. By the operation of the

32 Simon and Théophane, The Secret Teachings of Gnosis, p. 10.

33 Independent of any individual will whatsoever (particular or collective), which can act only within its special plane: "Man, insofar as he is man, can dispose of nothing better and nothing more than his hominal destiny, whose individual course he is indeed free to arrest. But this contingent being, endowed with contingent virtues and possibilities, cannot move, or stop, or influence himself outside the special contingent plane in which, for the moment, he is placed and exercises his faculties. It is unreasonable to suppose that he could modify, still less arrest, the eternal march of the universal cycle." (Ibid., p. 50). — See also what was said previously concerning the two extreme points of the individual cycle.

34 Ibid., p. 50.

35 The place of these central points is the Invariable Middle.

36 Or the plane of separation of the lower Waters and the upper Waters, that is to say of the two chaoses, formal and informal, individual and principial, of the manifested states and the non-manifested states whose totality constitutes the Total Possibility of the Universal Man. The Ocean of the Great Waters, the symbolic Sea, is, according to Fabre d'Olivet, the image of Universal Passivity: Mare, Mariah, Mâyâ (see also The Archeometer). It is the Great Primordial Nature (Mûla-Prakritî or Procreative Root, Bhûta-Yoni or Matrix of beings), manifestation of the Feminine Principle, reflected image, that is to say inverted (according to the law of analogy), of the Virgin of Light: the latter, "spiritual Ocean above, from all its effluences disengages beings from the sentimental Ocean below" (Ibid., p. 58).

Spirit, projecting the Celestial Ray that is reflected through the mirror of the Waters[37], there is enclosed within it a divine spark, uncreated spiritual germ, fragmentary Word, if one may so express it, which, developing to identify itself in act with the total Word, to which it is indeed identical in potency, will realize in its expansion the perfect blossoming of all the possibilities of the being. This divine principle involuted in beings is the Redemptive Word[38], Christos, "conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary"[39]; it is Agni[40] manifesting itself at the center of the Swastika, which is the cross traced in the horizontal plane, and which, by its rotation around this center, generates the evolutionary cycle constituting each of the elements of the universal cycle[41]. The center, the only point remaining immobile in this movement of rotation, is, by reason of its very immobility, the motor of the "wheel of existence"; it is the Law (that is to say the expression or manifestation of the Will of Heaven) for the cycle corresponding to the horizontal plane in which this rotation is effected, and its action is measured by the pitch of the evolutionary helix with vertical axis[42].

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37 "The Spirit does not move in the chaos; it moves above the Waters, that is to say above a plane of reflection, acting like a mirror, upon which the inverted image of the movement of the Spirit (or of the Activity of Heaven) is revealed to the chaos. This revelation immediately produces the Fiat Lux. — In the cosmic chaos, the Fiat Lux is translated by the luminous vibration capable of determining forms. In the human chaos, the Fiat Lux is translated by the sentimental vibration capable of engendering the desire to emerge from agnosticism." (Ibid., p. 9).

38 It is at least under this aspect that it is more particularly envisaged in relation to the human being; but when it is a question of the organization of the cosmic chaos, it is considered under its aspect of Creator (Brahmâ).

39 These words of the Catholic Creed explain themselves by what has just been said; but it is well understood, and we wish to state it formally in order to avoid any misunderstanding, that this symbolic interpretation has nothing to do with the doctrines of present-day Catholicism, for which there is not and cannot be any esoterism, as we shall explain in another study.

40 It is figured as an igneous principle (just as the luminous Ray that gives birth to it), fire being the active element in relation to water, the passive element.

41 For the figure of the Swastika, see 1st year, no. 11, p. 245.

42 "There is no direct means of appreciating this measure; it could only be known by analogy (principle of harmony), if the Universe, in its present modification, remembered its past modification, and could thus judge the quantity of metaphysical acquisition, and consequently measure the ascensional force. It is not said that the thing is impossible; but it is not within the faculties of the present humanity. — One thus sees that those who take the circle as the symbol of Evolution simply forget the first cause." (The Metaphysical Way, pp. 95 and 96). — The pitch of the helix is the vertical distance between the two extremities of a spire, a distance which, in the totality of Evolution, must be regarded as infinitesimal. This element "is due expressly to the sum of a death or a birth, and to the coincidence of this death and this birth"; moreover, "these phenomena of death and birth, considered in themselves and outside the cycles, are perfectly equal" (The Metaphysical Way, pp. 138 and 139).

The realization of the possibilities of the being by the action of the Word (action always interior, since it is exercised from the center of each plane) is figured in the different symbolisms by the blossoming of a flower on the surface of the Waters: this symbolic flower is ordinarily the lotus in the Oriental tradition, the rose in the Western tradition[43]. Considered first in the central plane (horizontal plane of reflection of the Celestial Ray), as integration of the corresponding state of being, this blossoming may be figured, for the Microcosm, by that of a flower with five petals, forming the Pentagram or the Blazing Star, and, for the Macrocosm, by that of a flower with six petals, forming the double triangle of the Seal of Solomon[44]; but it will extend beyond this plane, to the totality of the states of being, according to the indefinite development, in all directions starting from the central point, of the universal spherical vortex of which we have spoken previously[45].

Before concluding this already long study, we must insist on a point which, for us, is of capital importance: it is that our conception differs

43 Sometimes also the lily (with six petals): see The Archeometer, 1st year, no. 10, p. 218, note 3. — The lily is a macrocosmic symbol like the lotus, whereas the rose is most often a microcosmic symbol.

44 However, the lotus most usually has eight petals; in all cases, it always has an even number; but we cannot enter into a detailed explanation of this symbolism. We shall simply recall that 8 is the number of perfect equilibrium; the eight petals of the Lotus can also be related to the eight Koua, that is to say to the eight trigrams of Fo-hi (see The Metaphysical Way, pp. 39 and 40). On the other hand, "5, which is the number of the fall, is also the number of the will, which is the instrument of reintegration," that is to say of the realization of the Universal Man (see Commentaries on the Natural Tableau of L.-Cl. de Saint-Martin, 1st year, no. 8, p. 173), and 6 is the number of Creation (see Remarks on the Production of Numbers, 1st year, no. 9, p. 191). Let us further note that these numbers 5 and 6, which correspond respectively to the symbols of the Microcosm and of the Macrocosm, are the numerical values of the Hebrew letters ה and ו, the two middle letters of the Tetragrammaton יהוה, which, taken in reverse order, are also its last two. In Arabic, the two corresponding letters form the pronoun Hôa, "He," whose number is thus equal to 11 (on this number 11, see The Archeometer, 2nd year, no. 3, p. 88, note 2). In Hebrew, the same pronoun (which is also used as a verb, to signify "He is") is written אוה, joining to these two letters, which here represent the union (or unification) of the Microcosm and the Macrocosm, the letter א, which, by its number 1, corresponds to the center of the unfolding of being; by its form, this same letter א recalls the symbol of the Swastika. The Hebrew pronoun אוה has the total number 12; without studying here the various meanings of this number, we shall simply note that the letter ל, whose alphabetical rank it marks, hieroglyphically expresses the ideas of expansion and development, as well as the involution of the spiritual principle (see the twelfth card of the Tarot), and that this same number is ordinarily written בי (10 + 2), uniting the initials of the names of the two Columns of the Temple, which symbolizes the union of the two complementary principles, masculine (י) and feminine (ב), in the Androgyny of Adam Qadmon. We have seen that these two principles are also represented in the Cross by the vertical and horizontal directions; finally, 12 = 3 × 4 also represents the expansion of the Cross, symbol of the quaternary, according to the three dimensions of space.

45 This completes the explanation of the symbol of the Rose-Cross; here again, as with the cross, we must note how insufficient is the interpretation given by Ragon concerning the rose (Ritual of the Degree of Rose-Croix, pp. 28 and 29).

essentially, in its very principle and by this principle, from all anthropomorphic and geocentric conceptions on which the Western religions rest[46]. We could even say that it differs infinitely from them, and this would not be an abuse of language, but on the contrary an expression more just than any other, and more adequate to the conception to which we apply it. In fact, there can obviously be no common measure between, on the one hand, the Self, envisaged as the totalization of the being integrating itself according to the three dimensions of the Cross, in order finally to reintegrate itself into its first Unity, realized in this very plenitude of expansion that the whole of space symbolizes, and, on the other hand, any individual modification whatsoever, represented by an infinitesimal element of the same space, or even the integrality of a state of being, whose planar figuration (with the restrictions that we have made, that is to say if one considers this state in isolation) still comprises an infinitesimal element with respect to three-dimensional space (by replacing this figuration in space, its horizontal plane then being regarded as effectively moving by an infinitesimal quantity in the direction of the vertical axis); and, since it is a matter of infinitesimal elements, even in a geometric symbolism necessarily restricted and limited, one sees that, in reality, it is indeed there, for what is symbolized respectively by the two terms that we have just compared with one another, an absolute incommensurability, depending on no arbitrary convention[47]. Each integration adds a dimension to the corresponding spatial representation; thus, if a first integration was needed to pass from the line to the surface, which is measured by the two-dimensional cross describing the indefinite circle that does not close, a second integration is needed to pass from the surface to the volume, in which the three-dimensional Cross creates, by the irradiation of its center in all the directions of the space where it is situated, the indefinite spheroid whose image is given us by a vibratory movement, the volume always open in all directions that symbolizes the universal vortex of the Way.

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46 On this same question, see 2nd year, no. 5, the note by our collaborator Abdul-Hâdi, entitled: Islam and Anthropomorphic Religions (pp. 152 and 153).

47 An indefinite is taken here as a symbol of the Infinite, insofar as it is permissible to say that the Infinite can be symbolized; but this in no way amounts to confusing them, and we shall moreover point out this distinction more explicitly later.

In what precedes, we have not established a clear distinction between the respective meanings of the two terms space and extension: if we have called space what is in reality only a particular three-dimensional extension, it is because, even in the highest degree of generalization of our spatial symbol, we have not gone beyond the limits of this extension, taken to give a figuration, necessarily imperfect, of the total being. However, if one wished to adhere to rigorous language, one should employ the word space only to designate the totality of all particular extensions; thus, spatial possibility, whose realization (in the sense of passage from potency to act) constitutes one of the special conditions of certain states of manifestation (such as our corporeal state, in particular), contains in its indefinitude all possible extensions. But this is moreover, even in all this generality, only a determinate possibility, indefinite without doubt, but nevertheless finite[48], since, as the production of numbers shows (both in decreasing series and in increasing series), the indefinite proceeds from the finite, which is possible only on condition that the finite contain this indefinite in potency. If it is impossible for us to admit the narrow point of view of geocentrism, we no more approve that kind of scientific, or so-called such, lyricism which seems especially dear to certain astronomers, and in which there is incessant talk of "infinite space" and "eternal time," which are pure absurdities; here again, one must see, as we shall show elsewhere, only another aspect of the tendency to anthropomorphism.

Another important remark in this order of ideas is that the considerations that we have set forth do not lead us at all, as some might wrongly believe if we did not take the precaution of insisting on it somewhat, to envisage space, as Pascal did, as "a sphere whose center is everywhere and circumference nowhere." In fact, it is true that, in the geometric (that is to say spatial) representation of the total being, each point is, in potency, center of the being that this extension where it is situated represents; but one must not forget that, as we have already

48 If it were otherwise, the coexistence of an indefinitude of other possibilities, which are not comprised within that one and each of which is equally susceptible of an indefinite development, would be manifestly impossible; and this consideration alone would suffice to demonstrate the absurdity of this so-called "infinite space" of which there has been so much abuse.

said, between the fact (or the object, which is the same thing) taken as symbol and the metaphysical principle that one wishes to symbolize, the analogy is always inverted. Thus, in space considered in its actual reality (it is indeed thus that Pascal understood it) and no longer as symbol of the total being, all points belong to the domain of manifestation, by the very fact that they belong to space, which is one of the possibilities whose realization is comprised in this domain, which constitutes what we may call the exteriority of Universal Existence. To speak here of interior and exterior is still, no doubt, a symbolic language, and of a spatial symbolism; but the impossibility of dispensing with such symbols proves nothing other than the imperfection of our means of expression; we obviously cannot communicate our conceptions to others (in the manifested and formal world, since it is a matter of a restricted individual state, outside of which it could moreover not be a question of "others") except through figurations (manifesting these conceptions in forms), that is to say through analogies. We can then, and we must even, in order to conform our expression to the normal relation of these analogies (which we would willingly call, in geometric terms, a relation of inverse homothety), reverse the statement of Pascal's phrase, and say that, not only in space, but in all that is manifested, it is the exterior (or the circumference) that is everywhere, while the center is nowhere, for it is non-manifested[49]; but this point, which is nothing manifested, contains in potency all manifestations, it is the unmoving motor of all things, the immutable principle of all differentiation. This point produces all space (and the other manifestations) by coming out of itself, so to speak, by the deployment of its virtualities, and thus it fills this whole space; yet, in principle, it is not subject to space, since it is it that creates it, and it never ceases to be identical to itself; and, when it has realized its total possibility, it is to return to this first Unity that contained everything in potency, Unity which is itself (the Self), and from which, consequently, envisaged in itself, it had not gone out. It is by the consciousness of this Identity of Being, permanent through all the multiple modifications of the one Existence, that there manifests itself, at the very center of our

49 It is "the place which is not" (ויב), in which the equilibrium of the Balance resides, as is said at the beginning of the Siphra di-Tseniutha (see The Archeometer, 2nd year, no. 5, p. 146).

present state of being, as of all other states of being, this superior element of man, uncreated and non-incarnated, that we have called the Celestial Ray; and it is this consciousness, superior to every created faculty, and implying assent to the law of harmony that logically links and unites all things in the Universe, it is, we say, this consciousness which, for our individual being, but independently of it and of its conditions, constitutes the "sensation of eternity"[50].

50 See Pages dedicated to the Sun, 2nd year, no. 2, p. 65.

APPENDIX C: MONOTHEISM AND ANGELOLOGY

What we have said previously makes it possible to understand the nature of the error that is capable of giving rise to polytheism: this, which is in sum only the most extreme case of "association"[1], consists in admitting a plurality of principles regarded as entirely independent, whereas in reality they are and can only be more or less secondary aspects of the supreme Principle. It is evident that this can only be the consequence of a misunderstanding of certain traditional truths, precisely those that relate to the divine aspects or attributes; such a misunderstanding is always possible in isolated individuals, more or less numerous, but its generalization, corresponding to a state of extreme degeneration of a traditional form in the process of disappearing, has no doubt been much rarer in fact than is ordinarily believed. In any case, no tradition, whatever it may be, could, in itself, be polytheistic; it is to invert every normal order to suppose a polytheism at the origin, following the "evolutionist" views of most moderns, instead of seeing in it only the simple deviation that it is in reality. Every true tradition is essentially monotheistic; to speak in a more precise way, it affirms before all else the unity of the supreme Principle[2], from which everything is derived and on which everything depends entirely, and it is this affirmation that, in the expression it takes on specifically in traditions of religious form, constitutes monotheism properly so called; but, subject to this necessary explanation in order to avoid any confusion of points of view, we can in sum extend without inconvenience the meaning of this term monotheism so as to apply it to every affirmation of principial unity. Moreover, when we say that it is thus monotheism that is necessarily at the origin, it goes without saying that this has nothing in common with the hypothesis of

1 There is "association" as soon as one admits that anything whatsoever, outside the Principle, possesses an existence belonging to it in its own right; but naturally, from there to polytheism properly so called, there can be multiple degrees.

2 When it is truly a matter of the supreme Principle, one would, in all rigor, have to speak of "non-duality," unity, which is moreover an immediate consequence of it, being situated only at the level of Being; but this distinction, while being of the greatest importance from the metaphysical point of view, in no way affects what we have to say here, and, in the same way that we can generalize the meaning of the term "monotheism," we can also and correlatively, to simplify the language, speak only of unity of the Principle.

an alleged "primitive simplicity" which has doubtless never existed[3]; it suffices, moreover, to avoid any misunderstanding in this regard, to remark that monotheism can include all possible developments regarding the multiplicity of divine attributes, and also that angelology, which is closely connected with this consideration of the attributes, as we explained previously, in fact occupies an important place in the traditional forms in which monotheism is affirmed in the most explicit and most rigorous manner. There is therefore no incompatibility here, and even the invocation of angels, on the condition of regarding them solely as "celestial intermediaries," that is to say ultimately, according to what we have already set forth, as representing or expressing such or such divine aspects in the order of informal manifestation, is perfectly legitimate and normal in the eyes of the strictest monotheism.

We must also point out, in this connection, certain abuses from the "historical" point of view, or so-called such, dear to so many of our contemporaries, and notably as regards the theory of "borrowings" of which we have already had to speak on various other occasions. Indeed, we have seen quite often authors claim, for example, that the Hebrews did not know angelology before the Babylonian captivity and that they borrowed it purely and simply from the Chaldeans; we have seen others maintain that every angelology, wherever it is found, invariably derives its origin from Mazdeism. It is fairly clear that such assertions implicitly suppose that what is at issue here is only simple "ideas," in the modern and psychological sense of this word, or conceptions without real foundation, whereas, for us as for all those who place themselves at the traditional point of view, it is on the contrary a matter of knowledge of a certain order of reality; one does not see at all why such knowledge should have been "borrowed" by one doctrine from another, whereas one understands very well that it is, equally and in the same way, inherent in the one as in the other, because both are expressions of one and the same truth. Equivalent knowledges can and even must be found everywhere; and when we speak here of equivalent knowledges, we mean thereby that it is in the end the same knowledges, but presented

3 Cf. The Reign of Quantity and the Signs of the Times, chap. XI. — It is moreover rather difficult to understand how some can believe at once in "primitive simplicity" and in original polytheism, and yet it is so: this is once again a curious example of the innumerable contradictions of the modern mentality.

and expressed in different ways in order to adapt themselves to the particular constitution of such or such a traditional form[4]. One can say in this sense that angelology or its equivalent, whatever the name by which it will be designated more particularly, exists in all traditions; and, to give an example, it is scarcely necessary to recall that the Devas, in the Hindu tradition, are in reality the exact equivalent of the angels in the Judaic, Christian, and Islamic traditions. In all cases, let us repeat once again, what is at issue can be defined as the part of a traditional doctrine that refers to the informal or supra-individual states of manifestation, either in a simply theoretical way, or with a view to an effective realization of these states[5]. It is evident that this is something that, in itself, has not the slightest relation to any polytheism whatsoever, even if, as we have said, polytheism can be only a result of its misunderstanding; but those who believe that there exist polytheistic traditions, when they speak of "borrowings" like those of which we gave examples a moment ago, seem indeed to wish to suggest thereby that angelology would represent only a "contamination" of polytheism within monotheism itself! One might as well say, because idolatry can arise from a misunderstanding of certain symbols, that symbolism itself is only a derivative of idolatry; that would be a quite similar case, and we think that this comparison suffices fully to bring out all the absurdity of such a way of envisaging things.

To conclude these remarks intended to complete our previous study, we shall cite this passage from Jacob Boehme, which, with the terminology that is particular to him and in a form perhaps a little obscure as often happens with him, seems to us to express correctly the relations of angels with the divine aspects: "The creation of angels has a beginning, but the forces from which they were created have never known a beginning, but assisted at the birth of the eternal beginning… They issued from the revealed Word, from the eternal nature, dark, igneous and luminous, from the desire of the divine revelation, and

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4 We previously alluded to the relations that exist between angelology and the sacred languages of the different traditions; this is a very characteristic example of the adaptation in question.

5 One may cite, as an example of the first case, the part of Christian theology that relates to angels (and moreover, more generally, exoterism can naturally situate itself here only at this sole theoretical point of view), and, as an example of the second, "practical Kabbalah" in the Hebrew tradition.

were transformed into ‘created’ images (that is to say fragmented into isolated creatures)[6].” And elsewhere, Boehme says again: “Each angelic prince is a property issued from the voice of God, and bears the great name of God[7].” Mr. A. K. Coomaraswamy, citing this last sentence and comparing it with various texts relating to the “Gods,” both in the Greek tradition and in the Hindu tradition, adds these words which entirely accord with what we have just set forth: “We scarcely need to say that such a multiplicity of Gods is not a polytheism, for all are the angelic subjects of the Supreme Deity from which they draw their origin and in which, as is so often recalled, they become one again[8].”

6 Mysterium Magnum, VIII, 1.

7 De Signatura Rerum, XVI, 5. — Concerning the first creation “issued from the voice of God,” cf. Insights into Initiation, pp. 304–305.

8 What is Civilization? in Albert Schweitzer Pestschrift. — Mr. Coomaraswamy also mentions, in this connection, the identification that Philo makes of angels with the “Ideas” understood in the Platonic sense, that is to say in sum with the “Eternal Reasons” that are contained in the divine intellect, or, in the language of Christian theology, in the Word envisaged insofar as it is the “place of possibles.”

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